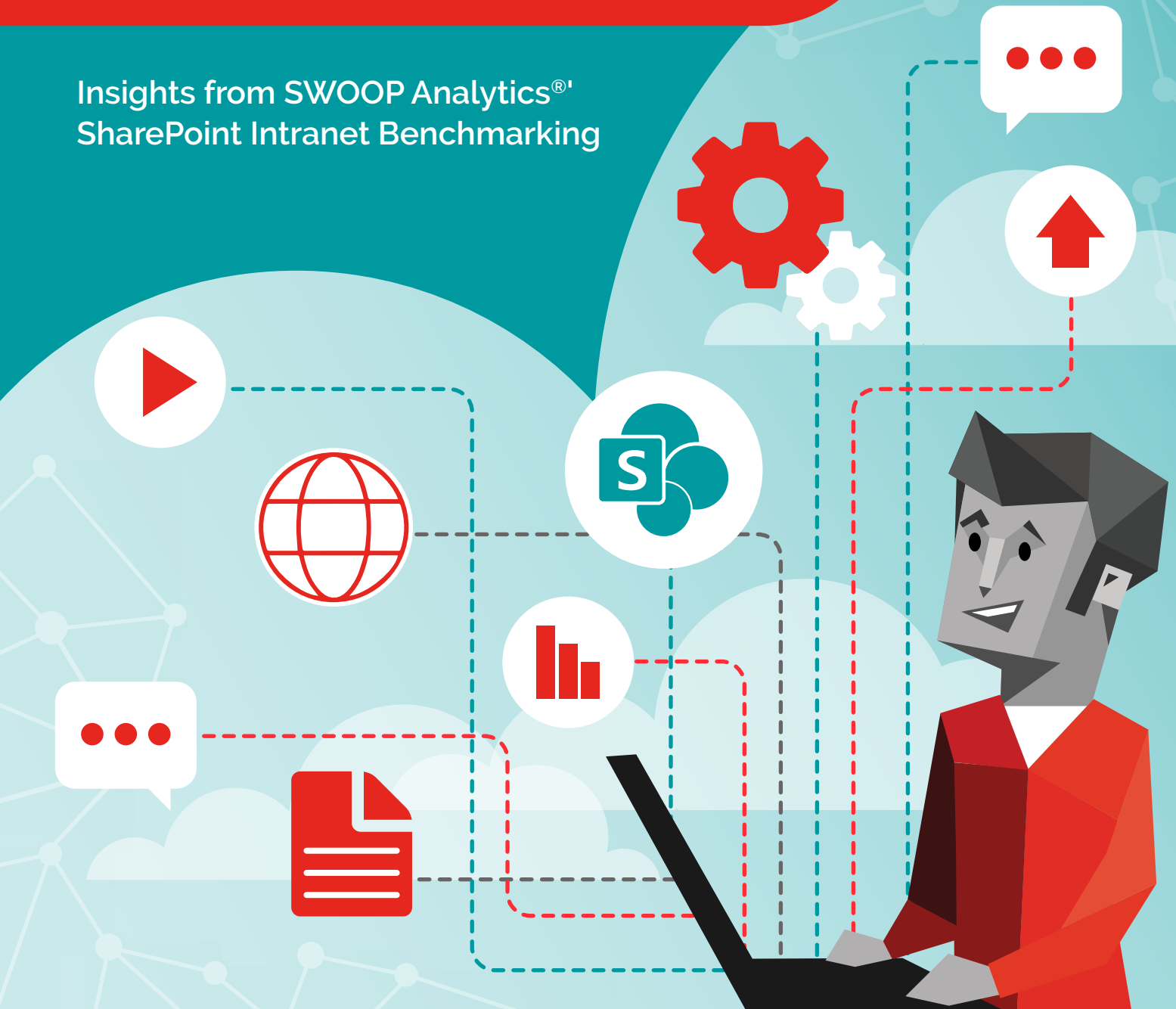


# How to run a successful intranet

Insights from SWOOP Analytics®  
SharePoint Intranet Benchmarking



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# 1 Executive summary

**SWOOP Analytics' inaugural SharePoint intranet benchmarking study is, as far as we know, the world's first analysis of SharePoint intranet data, based on the real-life behaviors of almost 100,000 employees.**

We have used this data, combined with extensive research, to shape benchmarks on what good looks like for intranet usage and to answer questions anyone involved in managing, or writing for, an intranet needs to know, including:

- When is the best time to post on the intranet?
- How much time do employees spend visiting and reading the intranet?
- How long should an intranet news article be?
- What devices do employees use to access the intranet?
- How can you capitalize on the small window of time employees spend on the intranet?

Our benchmarking data gives real-life insights into *when* people are reading the intranet, *what* they're reading on the intranet and for how long, *how* they're accessing the intranet and how you can *best shape content* to get maximum engagement.

We've analyzed more than 36,000 intranet pages accessed by almost 100,000 employees, including 14,271 intranet "news" pages, across seven organizations worldwide to produce this SharePoint intranet benchmarking report.

While seven organizations might not sound like a lot, we have found in all our years of benchmarking millions of interactions across hundreds of organizations worldwide that a bigger sample size only marginally changes the major conclusions. Having said that, we will publish an updated SharePoint intranet benchmarking report in May 2024 and expect to have many more organizations in the study at that time. We'd love you to join our benchmarking. [Trial SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) for free by March 30, 2024 and you will be anonymously included in the benchmarking study. We believe we are sitting on an insightful set of findings that can help you manage an intranet that is both useful and used.

We appreciate it is still early days for many organizations looking to SharePoint Online for their intranet. While the data we are exposing here represents the average performances across the seven organizations benchmarked, we did note that on some dimensions – for example, time of day, or day of week that news is consumed - can vary between organizations, depending on their business contexts. We would therefore encourage you to trial [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) using your own organization's data.

## 1.1 Key Insights from SWOOP Analytics' 2023 SharePoint intranet benchmarking

In SWOOP Analytics' 2023 SharePoint intranet benchmarking we analyzed the SharePoint intranet usage patterns of 92,717 employees across 36,400+ intranet pages, including 14,271 intranet "news" pages, over seven organizations.

### When is the prime time employees read news on the intranet?



**Optimal time is 7am-9am or 11am-1pm on a weekday, with Thursday being the best day.**

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found employees tend to read news mostly at the beginning of the day (7am-9am) and again at the midday break (11am-1pm). However, news is being consumed any time during the normal working hours of 8am-6pm.

News is read liberally on each weekday. Thursday is marginally a better day for news reading and Friday the least. However, unless a news item is time sensitive, it is best to post earlier in the week to avoid the disrupted attention of a weekend.

### How much time do employees spend visiting and reading the intranet?



**17 minutes a day, on average.**

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found employees spend, on average, 17 minutes visiting the intranet. Visiting time ranged from a low of 11 minutes to a high of 22 minutes per work day, per employee. The average time spent reading news pages ranged from 4-16 minutes per day.

News page editors can expect to have an average 10 minutes per workday of an employee's attention. For maximum impact, think about what key messages you would like to prioritize for the small window of attention available.

### How long should an intranet news article be?



**500 words or more.**

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found the top ranking 20% of news articles averaged around 500 words; which appears to be the sweet spot. Perhaps surprisingly, there isn't a big drop off in readership if an article stretches to 1,500 words but news articles with 300 words or less had the least engagement.

## What devices do employees use to access the intranet?



### Their desktop.

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found 99.76% of employees access the intranet via their desktop. Only 0.22% of employees access the intranet via their phone and 0.02% by a tablet.

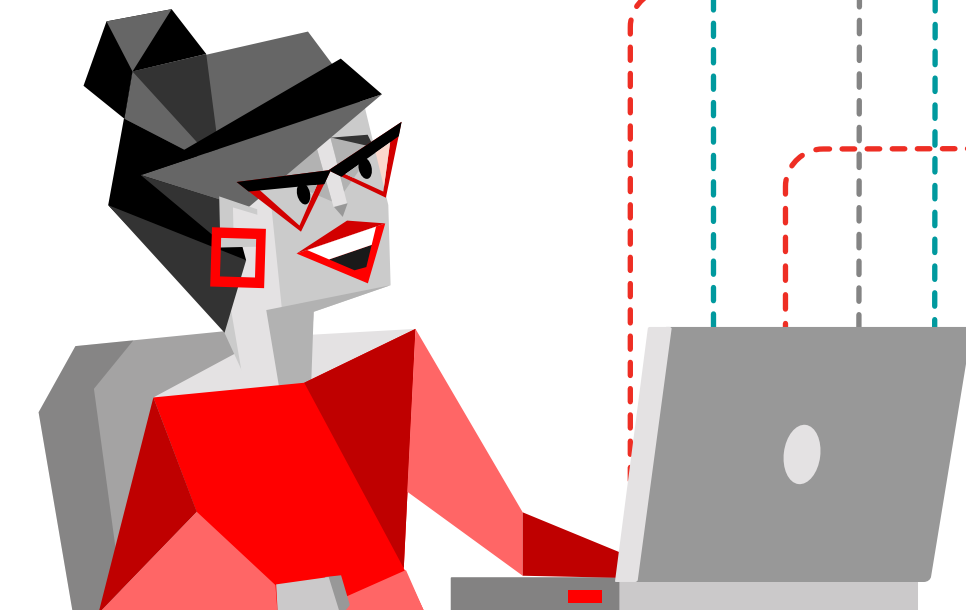
## How long do intranet news articles sustain reader interest?



### About a week.

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found the natural life of a news article lasts about a week. Depending on the topic and context of each news article, the decay rates ranged from three days up to a few weeks.

The quality of intranet pages correlates with visitors coming to the page. Higher quality = more visitors. Both content and news pages with bespoke content attract four times as many visits as pages that bring already existing webparts/content together. "Content" pages, as opposed to "news" pages, get three times more visits.



## 2 Introduction

Over the past decade we have seen a gradual evolution of intranets to encompass digital workplace and employee experience toolsets into a more comprehensive internal communications platform.

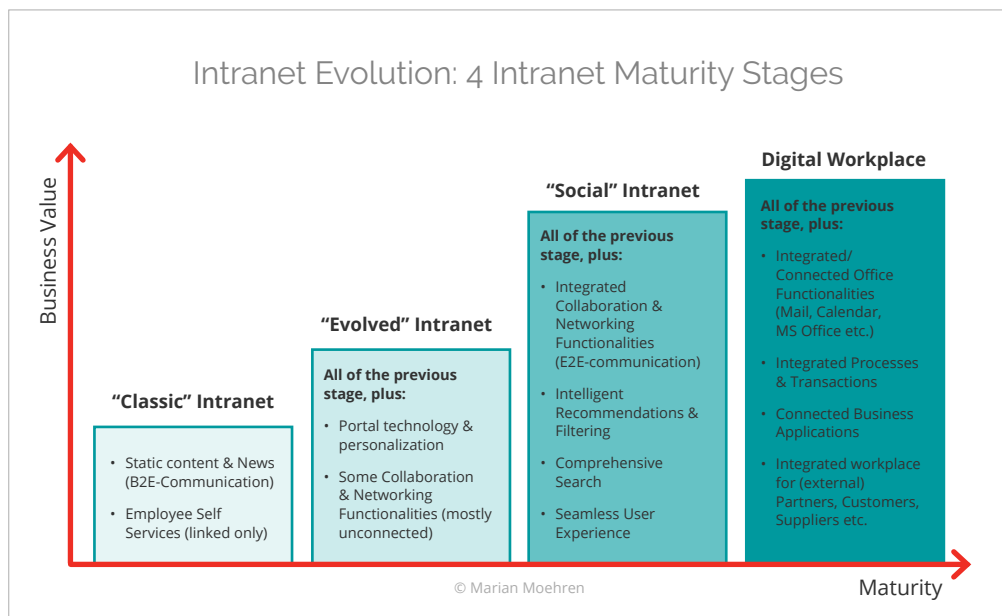


Figure 1 - The intranet evolution.

The comprehensive Clearbox [annual intranet product reviews](#) chose to group the Microsoft intranet offering [SharePoint Online](#) with [Viva Connections](#) and [Viva Engage](#) for this year's review, in recognition of this evolution.

At [SWOOP Analytics](#) we released our [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) product in 2023 to complement [SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage](#). While this benchmarking report focuses on SharePoint intranet usage, we are also preparing to release our in-depth [Viva Engage Benchmarking Report](#), which will also touch on how organizations use both Viva Engage and SharePoint intranet as an expanded internal communications platform.

One motivation for creating our [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) product was the extensive commentary we were hearing from our internal communications clients about the poor state of intranet analytics. Many were relying on Google Analytics, a tool for external websites, for analytics that are fundamentally mismatched to the needs of the

internal communications professional. The recent Clearbox report reinforces our findings with its section on analytics: "...this remains one of the lowest scoring scenarios in our report despite it being an area of importance for clients".

Ahead of developing [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) we undertook our most comprehensive end-user research. We surveyed, interviewed and researched the major issues faced by internal communications and intranet managers.

We settled on this problem statement as representative of what we were hearing:

**"Corporate communicators post content on their SharePoint intranets, but cannot measure the impact (readership, engagement etc). The out-of-the-box analytics do not meet the needs of corporate communicators."**

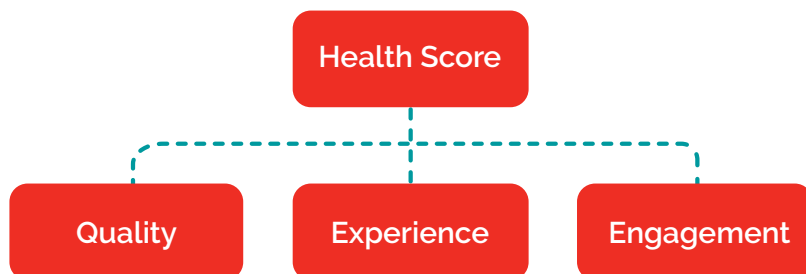
We collected individual value proposition statements from our interviewees, with some typical examples provided here:

When I **"know if there are any problem pages"**; I will be able to **"make sure they are fixed"**; which will result in **"quality and trust in the intranet content"**.

When I **"know which areas of the business read which news items"**; I will be able to **"understand if the right people are getting the information"**; which will result in **"maximize the reach of important news"**.

When I **"know which content is accessed most frequently"**; I will be able to **"compare this to organizational expectations"**; which will result in **"content prepared for maximum organizational impact"**.

Informed by our research, we fell on the concept of a universal intranet "Health Score" which could be applied at multiple levels i.e. page, site and intranet. The Health Score forms the basis of the SWOOP Analytics' SharePoint intranet benchmarking included in this section:

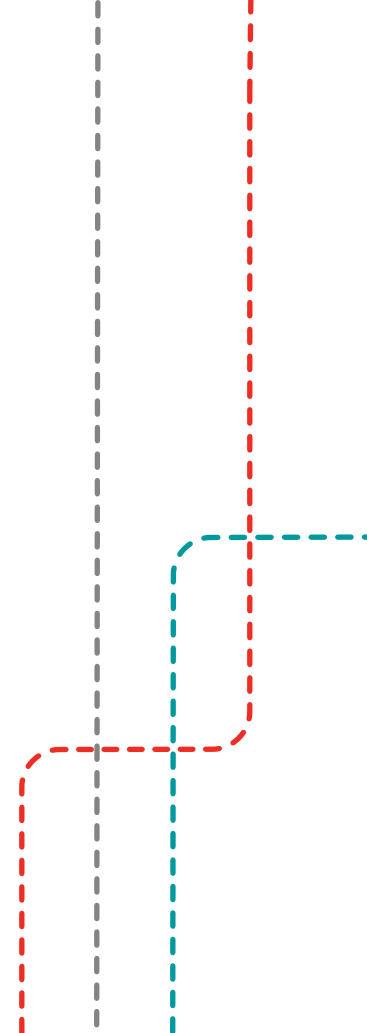


Each of the component parts are quantitatively measured to form the overall Health Score.

The details of the component parts are shown below:

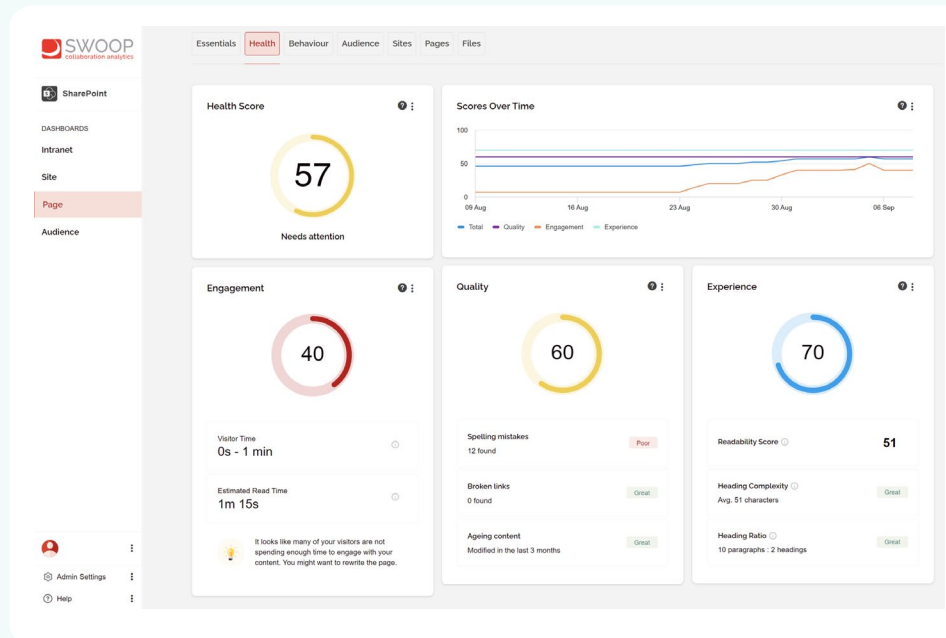
Table 1 - Health Score Composition.

INTRANET HEALTH	Score created by combining three scores which have been defined as Quality, User Experience, Engagement
<p><b>Quality Score</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdated content</li> <li>• Spelling, grammar</li> <li>• Broken links</li> </ul>
<p><b>User Experience Score</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readability using the <a href="#">Lix</a> readability score</li> <li>• Based on the length of sentences and number of words over six characters</li> <li>• Heading length</li> <li>• Heading to paragraph ratio</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engagement Score</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratio of time on page to reading time</li> <li>• Ratio of time on page to skim time</li> <li>• Ratio of time on page to scan time</li> </ul>



## Page Health in SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet

Within our [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) product you can see how an intranet page performs for engagement, quality and experience by accessing the “Page” dashboard under the “Health” tab. It shows the overall health score, along with the “Scores Over Time” for each measure. The “Engagement” report compares the time visitors spend against the time it would take to read the page. The “Quality” report highlights spelling mistakes, broken links and how up-to-date the page is. Finally, the “Experience” report shows the readability score (the lower the better), along with the complexity of headings and how many paragraphs there are for each heading.



**You can access the Health Score quickly by clicking on the page name from the “Top Pages”, “Pages to Fix” or “Page Listing” reports.**





## 3 Benchmarking methodology for SharePoint intranet

**For this first benchmarking study we analyzed SharePoint Online data from seven organizations, with just under 100,000 employees in total. Collectively, we mined more than 36,400 anonymized intranet pages, of which 14,271 were classified as “news” pages. These pages were arranged into more than 200 sites.**

The report focuses on SharePoint Online sites that make up the participating organizations' intranets. All SharePoint sites not deemed by the participating organizations to be a part of the intranet were excluded.

Each page was analyzed for:

- Number of Visitors
- Visit Time
- \*Health: Engagement
- \*Health: Experience
- \*Health: Quality
- Page Creator/Editors
- Date/Time created/modified
- Page ID
- User ID
- Date/Time Viewed
- Page length, words, paragraphs
- Device used to access

\*Health scores are only available for pages that contain editable text. Pages that are compiled simply from components, with no customized text added, are not assessed.

Modern intranets are a mix of news pages and more persistent information pages. We treat news separately from content pages, because of the special nature of news. News pages are identified by a page type in SharePoint Online and are typically text based, and are therefore assessed for their relative health.

Our page analysis looks back to pages created from 2019 until the current day. Our reader/viewer data was collected for recent periods ranging from two to three months.

## 4 Terminology

To help readers maximize their understanding of this section we are providing the following terminology guidance:

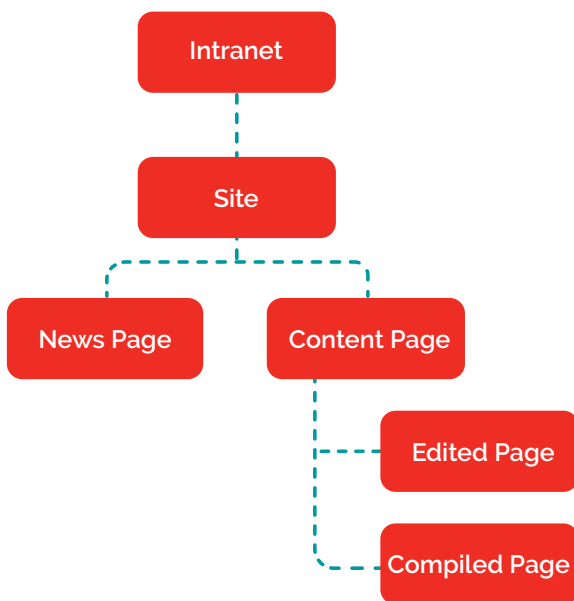


Figure 2 – Terminology.

SharePoint Online is the name for the “intranet”; not to be confused with the SharePoint file store. This report only refers to the use of SharePoint for an intranet.

The intranet is comprised of SharePoint sites containing intranet pages. Microsoft separately classifies “News Pages”. The remaining pages we are labelling “Content Pages”. These pages typically hold more persistent information like company policies and procedures, access pages to applications and the like. Of the content pages we have also divided them into “Edited” and “Compiled”. Edited content pages contain custom text that the page owner has created. This text will attract a SWOOP Health Score assessment. A compiled content page has been assembled from pre-existing components. While some of these components will contain text, the text has not been authored by the page owner. In general, the text is not available to SWOOP’s Health Score assessment.

Intranet editors refer to employees who have either created or modified a page.

A “visit” to a page indicates a signal has been captured for an employee accessing a page. Visit time reflects the time spent on a page.

“Reading time” reflects the time spent on a news page i.e. we assume time spent on a news page is for reading, though we accept that this might be inflated at times.

# 5 Findings from SWOOP Analytics' SharePoint Intranet Benchmarking

## 5.1 How big are our intranets? Basic sizing statistics

Just how much information should be provided on your intranet? We were somewhat surprised by the lack of an accepted norm; and the data below reflects this:

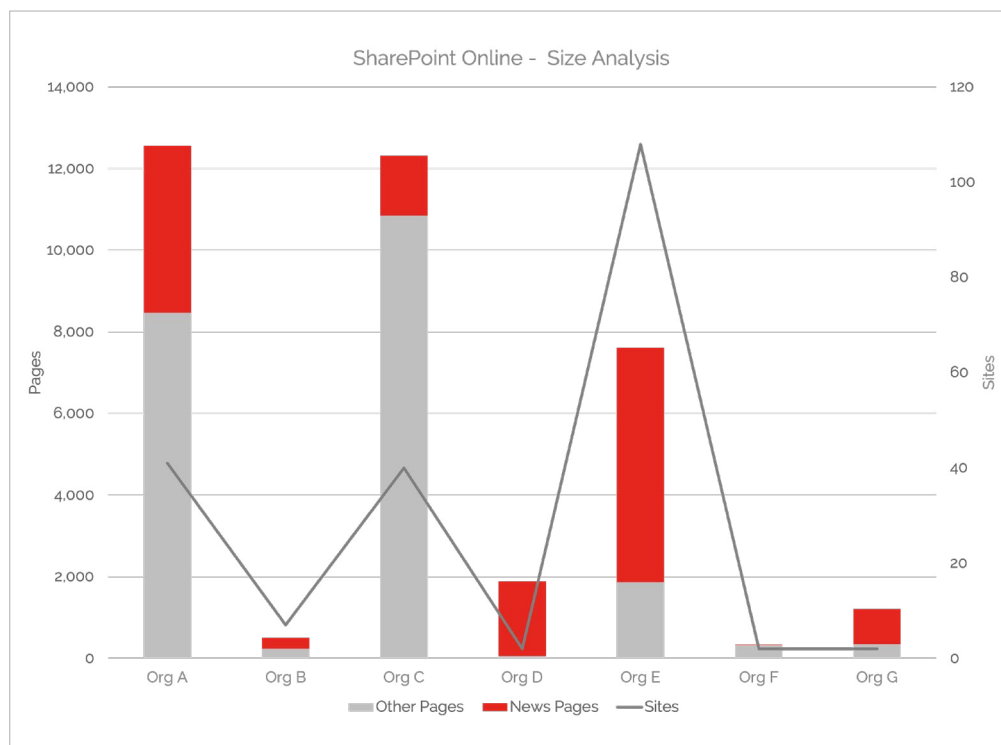


Figure 3 - Intranet sizes.

While one might expect the larger the organization = the larger the intranet, this doesn't exactly hold true. The proportion of pages devoted to news also varied significantly within our admittedly small sample.

The use of sites to help structure pages was also quite variable:

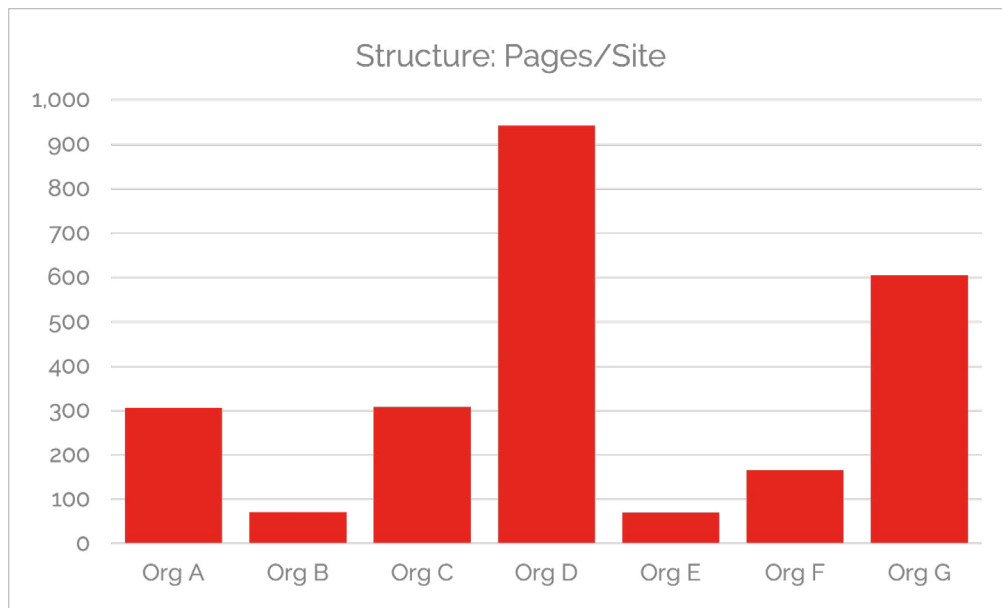


Figure 4 - Average pages/site.

## 5.2 What percentage of employees access the intranet?

Across the seven organizations benchmarked, the majority ranged between 80% to 90% of employees accessing the intranet over the two to three month period assessed. The best performer was 98% and the poorest at 65%.

[A good target for intranet readership should be around the 90% mark over a three-month period.](#)

Looking at the subset of employees that access news pages, the average is 36%. Again, there is a large range from less than 1% up to 74%. [For intranet news readership, a target of 40% over a three-month period is a good starting point.](#)

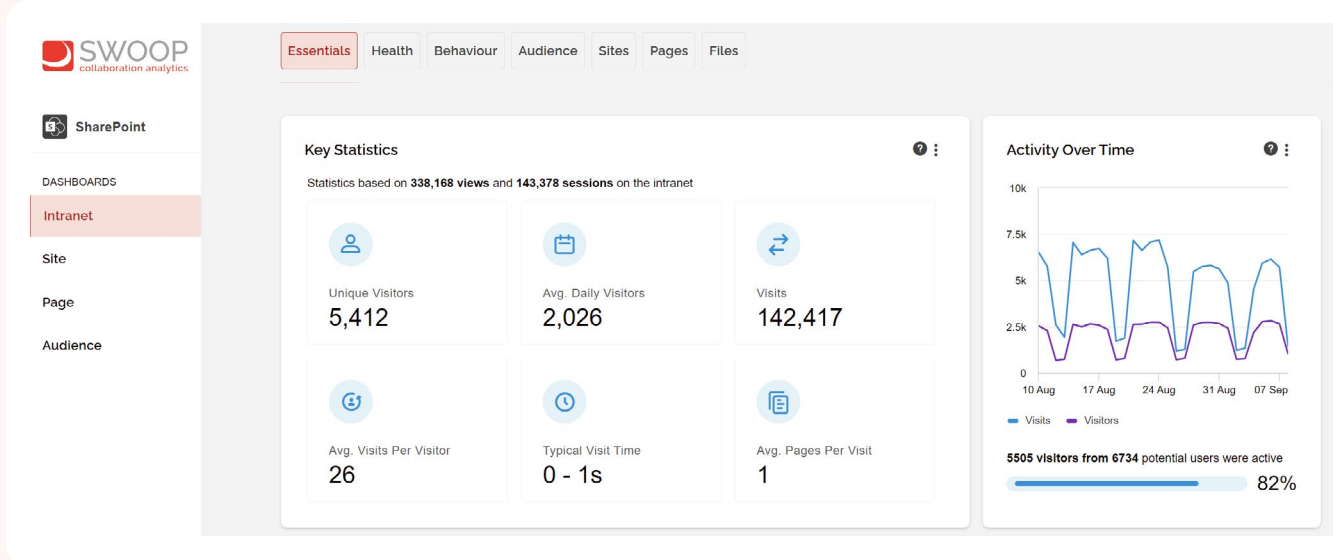
## 5.3 How often do employees visit the intranet?

Frequency of visits also varied somewhat between the organizations analyzed. Clearly the user experience plays a part. We found those employees who visit the intranet do so almost every day (0.8 days/visitor to be precise). However, visits varied from as low as once every three days, to multiple times a day.

Knowing how often employees visit the intranet can help with the planning of content releases. But it is a two-way street. Poor content will no doubt impact how often employees visit and vice versa. From the data we have to date, we would suggest [a target of at least daily employee visits to the intranet is a worthwhile goal.](#)

## Key statistics and activity in SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet

Head to the “Intranet” dashboard and the “Essentials” tab to see what percentage of employees visit your intranet. You’ll see it on the bottom of the “Activity Over Time” report.



You’ll also find the average number of times each visitor visited the intranet in the past 30 days on the “Key Statistics” report, along with the daily number of visitors.

## 5.4 What percentage of pages are accessed?

Just what proportion of intranet pages should we expect to be visited? To test this, we analyzed pages accessed over a period of two to three months across the seven organizations.

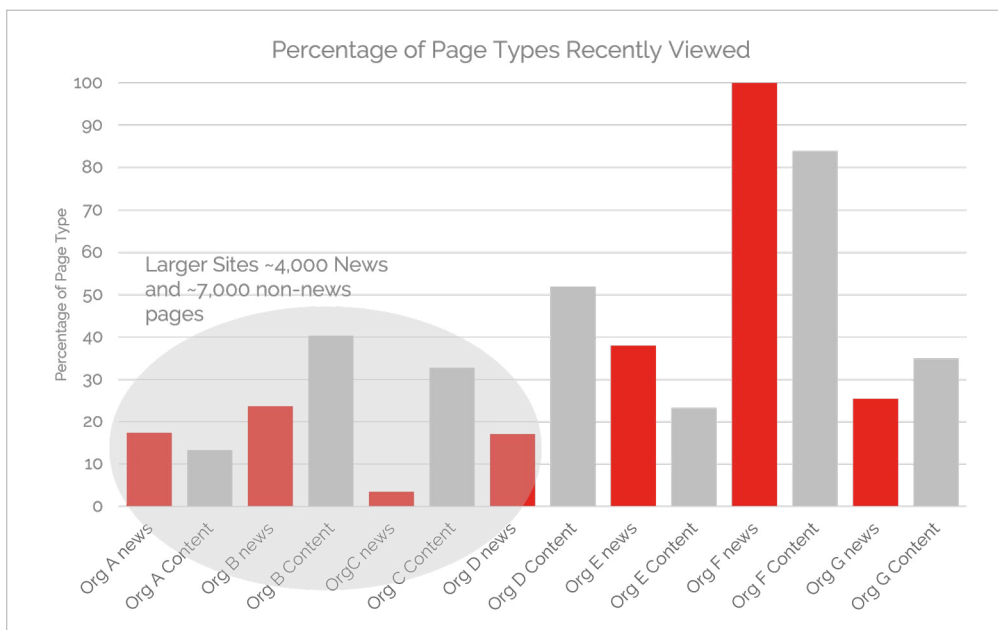


Figure 5 - Percentage of pages visited.

The above chart identifies the news and content pages accessed across the seven organizations. While there is variation, a potential rule of thumb target might be [25% of news pages visited \(75% not visited\) and 40% of content pages visited \(60% not visited\)](#).

This might seem like a lot of unvisited pages on the intranet. Cloud storage is relatively inexpensive, so perhaps may not be an issue. If it does become a problem, “old news” pages could be archived with little risk of negative outcomes.

## 5.5 When are employees reading the news?

For internal communications employees, knowing when published news articles are likely to attract the most readership can be important. Across our seven organizations we did see some variability in “Time of Day” and “Day of Week” measures, depending on the workforce context. For example, those organizations that are globally spread, or have around the clock frontline employees, will impact the time of day patterns.

What is clear is that employees are reading news any hour of the day, even late into the evening or early in the morning. The following charts are averaged across all seven organizations, which does average out some of the more extreme anomalies.

### When are people reading your news item?

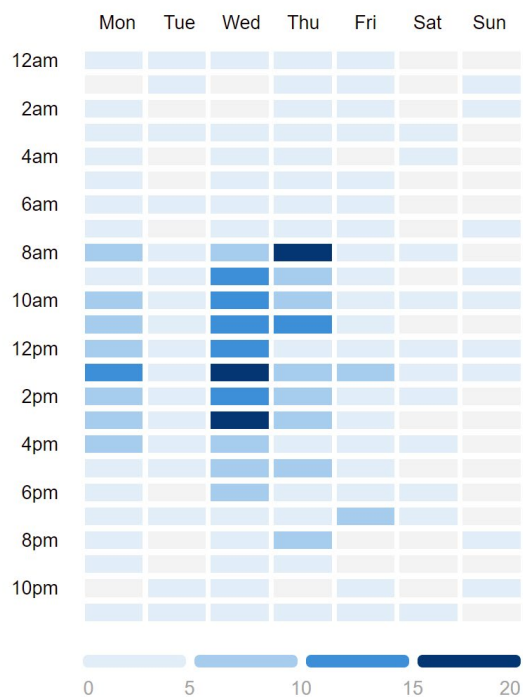
Within [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) you'll find an “Activity By Time” report which shows the number of visits broken down by hour of the day. On the “Page” dashboard you can search for your news item and then go the “Behaviour” tab to find the report.

The times with the darkest shading are the most popular times for visitors.

#### Activity By Time



There are multiple popular time slots. Check the heat map for more details.



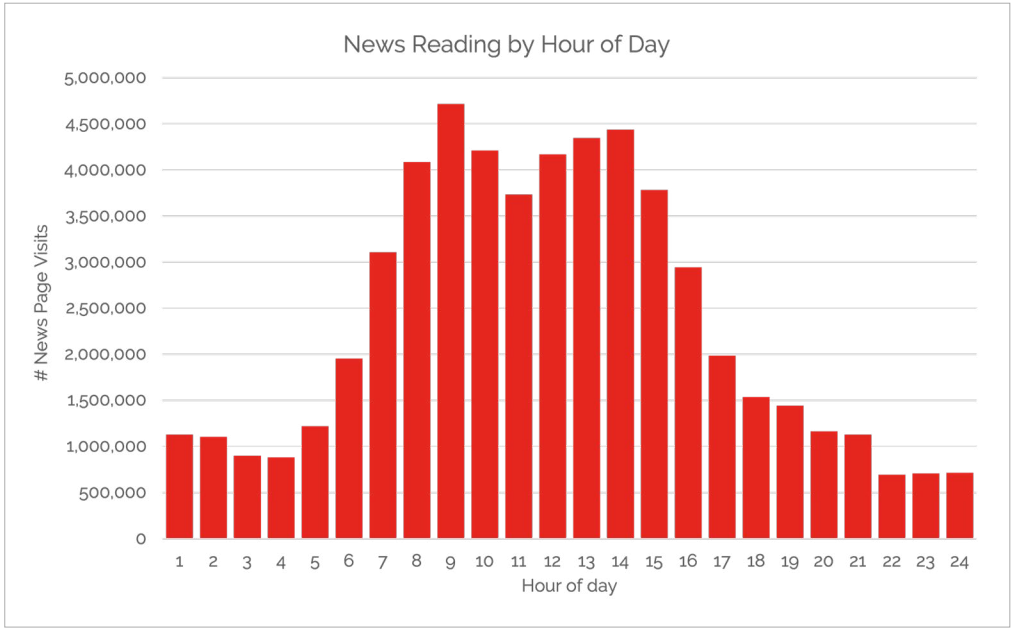


Figure 6 - Time of day news reading.

As a general rule of thumb, employees tend to read news mostly at the beginning of the day (7am-9am) and again at the midday break (11 am-1pm). However, news is being consumed any time during normal working hours of 8am-6pm.

Day of Week reading can also be contextual but, on average, we can see that news is read liberally on each weekday (Monday to Friday). Thursday is marginally a better day for news reading and Friday the least:

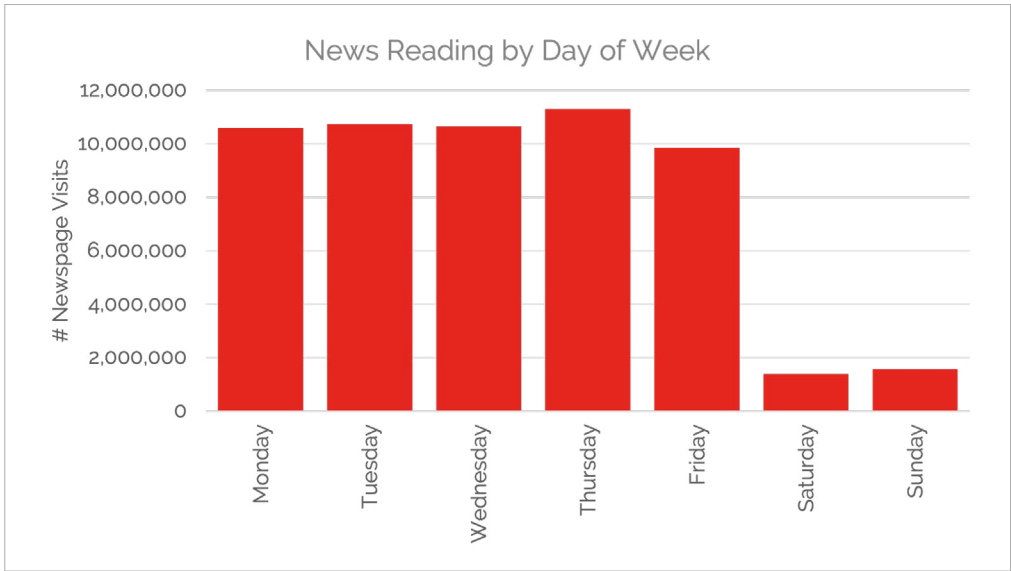


Figure 7 - News reading by day of week.

# When should you post news on your intranet?

When is the best time to post a news item on your intranet? The answer to this question could be the silver bullet for anyone involved in internal communications. (Spoiler – if you have Mondayitis, you may not want to know the answer!)

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking study of SharePoint intranets found the most popular times for reading the intranet is 7am-9am or 11am-1pm on a weekday, with Thursday being the best day. However, news is being consumed any time during normal working hours of 8am-6pm.

With these findings in mind, we asked a panel of intranet specialists and thought leaders when they would recommend news items be posted on the intranet for maximum engagement.

**Jonas Bladt Hansen**, co-founder of Danish internal communications consultancy **Next Level IC**, says this finding aligns with his vast experience and knowing when most people consume news items on the intranet gives internal communicators the data they need to create an engaging content plan.



"In other words, **prioritize the content that should have the most attention in the beginning of the week**," Jonas said.



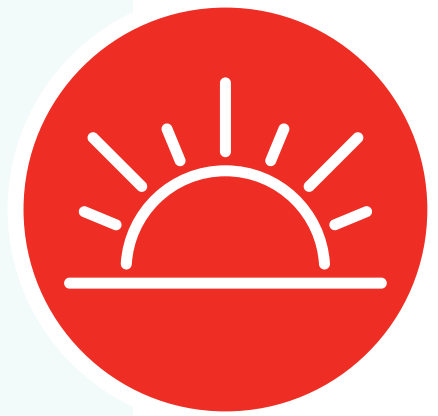
**Chris Harrer**, Assistant Vice President, Internal Communications – Digital, at US-based technology and entertainment giant **Comcast**, says he finds **Monday mornings at 7am, and Wednesday or Thursday mid to late mornings, are key times to publish content.**

"We see a burst of readership on Monday mornings and then lunch and end of day during mid-week," Chris said.

Another factor to consider when publishing a news article on the intranet, Chris says, is to take into account when the company newsletter goes out.

"The company newsletter is always a generator of readership on the intranet, so you need to take that into account when publishing content," he said.

"Our main newsletter goes out on Wednesday late morning which does impact the Wednesday lunch rush or end of day readership."





**Jonathan Phillips**, co-founder of **Lithos Partners**, a UK-based digital communication and collaboration consultancy, agrees with SWOOP's findings for the most popular times to read news on the intranet but issues a warning. If everyone publishes their news at the same time, nothing will be in the spotlight.



"While it's worth taking a look at your own data to identify peak reading times, if everyone tries to target the same optimum time you end up with everything being published at the same time and no story getting its time in the spotlight," Jonathan said.

"More important is to ensure you have a regular cadence of comms, so there's always fresh content. Data can help with that 'air traffic control'.

**"Take some time to understand how your people work - their working hours and peak busy times - and think how you can make your comms work for the way that people work** so that comms gets visibility at the times when people are most likely to engage with it."

Jonathan also has an interesting take as to why Thursdays may be the popular day for employees to read content.

"People open up their browsers at the start of their working day, and if there's news to catch their eye they'll take a few minutes to read it," he said.

"They might do the same when stopping for lunch or picking up afterwards.

"The shift to hybrid means Thursday is the last day in the office for many, which may explain the Thursday peak."



Principal Digital Workplace Consultant at intranet consultant **Step Two, Rebecca Rodgers**, says the question of when to post on an intranet is the topic of many discussions. Rebecca said it's important to understand the target audience for your message and to schedule the intranet post when that audience is most likely to read it.

"For frontline employees at a bank, the sweet spot was 8.10am which is when they were waiting to be let into the branch for the day," she said.

"At a not for profit, it was towards the end of their break time as they were client facing the rest of the time."

Rebecca says the broader message is that the **timing of news should be contextualised, around a deep understanding of target audiences.**

"This can be helped by creating internal communication strategies that focus on the type of news (leadership messages versus crisis comms) and audience group (office, frontline, field) rather than focusing on channels (intranet or Viva Engage)," she says.

"This will help internal communicators (and leaders) to confidently use the right method of delivery for a specific audience and message, rather than scatter-gunning across multiple channels.

"Time of delivery is then considered as one element of this holistic approach."

**Jamie Stokes**, Director, Digital Communications at **Cox Enterprises**, America's largest private broadband company, said in her experience, the time of posting on the intranet didn't make much difference, but **frequent rotation in our curated featured news on the homepage would boost engagement.**



"Having fresh content there was key," Jamie said.

"We saw similar consumption patterns as noted above, more so during morning hours."



**Suzie Robinson**, consultant at specialist intranet consultancy **ClearBox Consulting**, says while SWOOP's benchmarking findings align with her experience, popular intranet reading times can vary between organizations depending on things like the timing of repeated tasks (for example, after completing time sheets on a Friday afternoon) or regular meetings (waiting for an all company briefing on Monday afternoons).

Suzie says there are also benefits to be had from consistency, such as posting a particular type of news at the same time each week or month, so readers understand the publishing schedule and are prepared to read something.

"The volume of news and the design of the home page will also influence the best times to post on an intranet," she said.

"These are factors to consider in isolation and in combination. For example, an intranet with a high volume of news will need to have identified a way to make high priority messages stand out on the home page so they aren't smothered.

"This may then impact the chosen publication days/times."

Suzie says **the best time to share news is therefore when it's most appropriate for the audience, as well as for the nature of the message and intranet publishing practice.**

"For those with a global audience this can be a challenge, so means the day rather than the time will likely be of greater importance for some messages," she said.

"Checking analytics, like SWOOP, is definitely an important step to take to understand what's appropriate for your organization."

For a completely different take on when to publish on the intranet for maximum readership, Microsoft SharePoint and M365 specialist [Susan Hanley](#) pointed to an [Axios HQ report](#) which found the best time to send email comms is Sunday between 3-6 pm.



“I think the assumption is that news would be read Monday morning or Sunday evening as people prepare for work,” Susan said, adding that most of her clients prefer first thing Monday mornings as a time to publish news.

“But I think this really begs the question of where our consumers want to *read* their news.”

From her extensive research and stakeholder interviews, Susan said almost everyone says they prefer to get their news from email.

“Microsoft recently publicly announced a new feature that allows communicators to use a specific page template in SharePoint that is formatted for email and, when posted, effectively sends a snapshot of the entire page via email rather than the current feature which sends a page summary and a link that a user needs to click to read the full article,” Susan said.

“One of my clients publishes an email newsletter ‘Three Things You May Have Missed’ every Monday morning. While they are ‘aspirationally’ planning to use a SharePoint news digest to send this summary – the goal is to meet users where they are, which is email.”

Susan suggests rather than looking just at when to post news on the intranet, **look at which channel is best for news consumption.**

## 5.6 How much time do employees spend visiting and reading the intranet?

We found employees spend, on average, 17 minutes per day visiting the intranet. Across the seven organizations benchmarked, visiting time ranged from a low of 11 minutes to a high of 22 minutes per workday:

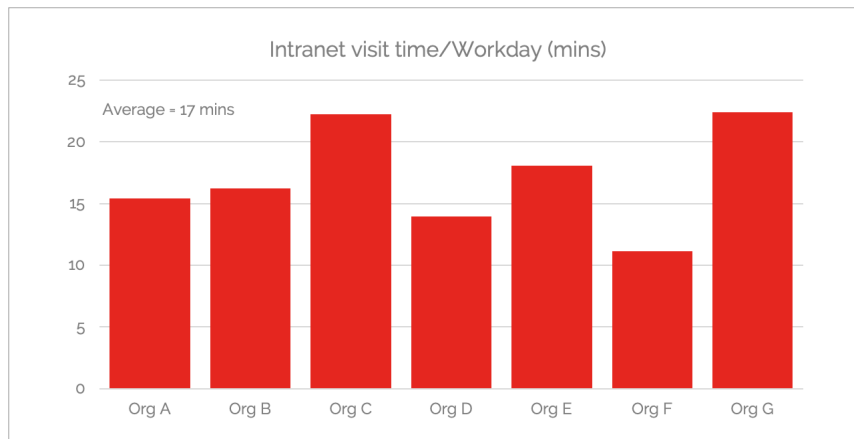


Figure 8 - Intranet visit times / workday.

Within the visit time, we found employees spend, on average, just over 10 minutes reading news pages on the intranet each workday. How long people spend reading news is likely related to how engaging that news is and how much time an employee is inclined to devote to consuming news. Across the seven organizations we analyzed, the average time spent reading news pages ranged from 4-16 minutes/day.

We know the “health” of a page is associated with the number of unique visitors it attracts. We also know visitors stay on the most popular pages for extended periods of time. Healthy pages could provide you with **up to four times** more employee engagement than poorly managed pages.

As a rule of thumb, as **a news page editor you can expect to have an average 10 minutes per workday of an employee’s attention.** For maximum impact, think about what key messages you would like to prioritize for the small window of attention available.

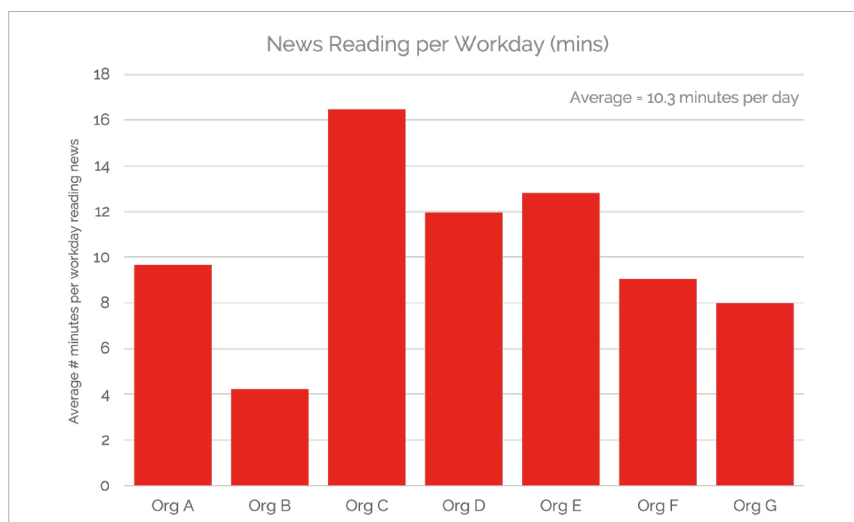


Figure 9 - Average time spent reading news pages per workday.

# How to make the most of the 10 minutes employees spend on the intranet

How can you capitalize on the small window of time employees spend on the intranet to get eyes on your key messaging? We probed the world's premier intranet specialists and thought leaders to get their advice on how to make the most of the average 10 minutes employees spend reading news on the intranet each day.

**The key advice is to ensure employees can easily navigate the intranet, while content must be written and presented in way that is easily digestible.**

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found employees spend, on average, 17 minutes a day visiting the intranet while the average time spent reading news pages ranged from 4-16 minutes a day. News page editors can therefore expect to have an average 10 minutes per workday of an employee's attention.

Microsoft SharePoint and M365 specialist [Susan Hanley](#) says with only 10 minutes of employees' attention per day, news articles need to be written in a way people can easily understand, and they must be targeted to the right people, with a call to action if needed. Achieving this may require news authors to have specific training.



"I firmly believe that we need to make sure that all news authors understand how to write a post so that it has a chance to get read – which may mean additional training," Susan said.

"I still see corporate comms publishing news articles that start with; 'Dear Colleagues', or have vague titles or images that have nothing to do with the message of the post, or where you need to read the entire article to understand the main message.

"If we want to encourage people to read news posts, they need to have the summary up front and they need to be much shorter than what I typically see.

"If we only have 10 minutes of attention – and I think that is *very* generous – we need to make every minute count and **write and name articles that will drive action and leverage personalization and targeting so that the most relevant messages are prioritized for readers.**"

**Chris Harrer**, Assistant Vice President, Internal Communications – Digital, at US-based technology and entertainment giant **Comcast**, also thinks 10 minutes a day of employees’ attention on the intranet could be on the generous side.



Which is why, Chris says, it’s important for intranet managers to work with the communications team to make sure content is easy to digest and quickly accessible. That way, news items will have an impact on employees and gain their attention. “Tone and writing style have a huge role to play with capturing employees’ time and attention,” he said.

**“Creating engaging and visual content is key to content success.”**



**Sharon O’Dea**, co-founder of **Lithos Partners**, a UK-based digital communication and collaboration consultancy, agrees the key to making the most of the small amount of time employees spend on the intranet is to make news easy to digest. Sharon says there’s often a huge disconnect between the way content is written and the finite time employees have in their day to consume it.

She says internal communicators need to use their 10-minute window wisely and always keep their user front of mind. Sharon says **intranet pages need to be written and designed with the end user – the employee – in mind.**

“Communicators are often guilty of an excessive focus on making it easy to publish, rather than easier to read,” she said.

“But there are vastly more readers than there are producers, so from a productivity perspective alone that has an impact.

“Comms that work for how people work – that fits into the time and space in which it’s consumed – tends to have more impact.”

Sharon recommends thinking about employees’ work practices to shape intranet content to suit.

“These help define the opportunity window for reading news and therefore the optimal length of an article. Is 10 minutes best as 1 x 10 minutes read, or 10 x 1 minute reads? Understanding real world work practices will help define this.”

**Jamie Stokes**, Director, Digital Communications at **Cox Enterprises**, America’s largest private broadband company, says the way to make the most of the 10 minute window is to **understand the most popular areas employees are visiting on the intranet and push important information in those locations.**



“For example, we noticed employees would go to a profile drop down menu on our intranet to clock in/out,” Jamie said.

“We added a news link in that drop down menu to expose our content in that key area.”



Keeping in mind you have about a 10 minute window of time to capture an employee's attention, [Jonas Bladt Hansen](#), co-founder of Danish internal communications consultancy [Next Level IC](#), says news needs to be communicated in a way employees can skim, and if they want more information, they can find it.

"Having the 10-minute window in mind, I would suggest making sure they design the news in a way that serves all their audiences, which are the skimmers, swimmers and deep divers," Jonas said.

"Often, the content is primarily designed for the deep divers which I believe make up around 2-5% of the readership. Often, you must read everything, or watch a full video, or read through a 50-page long presentation to understand the message.

**"We must see our roles as curators, helping people to get the most important news and messages fast.** And if someone would like to know more, they can dive deeper. But not the other way around!"

Jonas also flags that the more time employees spend on the intranet does not necessarily equate to success.

"In general terms, I would say that it's not a success criterion to get people to spend more time on the intranet. It all depends on what they do when they are there," he said.

"If they are spending five minutes searching for something that should take 10 seconds to find, that's not the kind of 'engagement' we would like to see."

[James Robertson](#), owner of Australian-based intranet consultancy [Step Two](#), says the focus should not be about how much time employees spend on the intranet but how useful it is.



"The goal must be to make the intranet more useful, and then as long as employees know about the improvements delivered (a step often missed), then usage should naturally follow," he said.

It makes sense, James said, to capitalize on the time employees are using the intranet by ensuring some of this time is spent reading company news.

"A balance will clearly need to be found between writing longer, more engaging news items, versus a larger number of shorter messages covering a wide range of key topics," he said.

James said the **user experience is also key to a successful intranet, to reduce the time taken to complete tasks on the intranet.**

"This can be achieved by providing navigation that makes sense to people, and publishing pages that quickly give clear answers to the questions at hand. In this world, reducing time spent on the intranet is considered a mark of success," he said.



**Suzie Robinson**, consultant at specialist intranet consultancy **ClearBox Consulting**, says to make the most of the 10-minute window, **publishers should ensure news is presented in a suitable manner**. This could be short videos, or the use of images, podcasts or plain-speaking articles. And don't be afraid to tap into other communications channels to reinforce key messaging.

"Ultimately, learning from what format works best for your organization's audience is as important as learning when is best to publish," Suzie said.

"There's no harm in trying new ways of communicating effectively using different delivery styles, as long as it's being done with your audience in mind.

"The relevance of other communication channels shouldn't be ignored here, too. All communication channels should have a clear purpose, which will help people decide where they are going to spend their time and see certain types of messages.

"So, while the intranet can (and, in my opinion, should) be a central news repository, that doesn't mean that messages shouldn't be reinforced elsewhere.

"Many intranet platforms can now help with managing a multi-channel approach, but there are likely to be channels that are managed outside of the intranet. These channels can direct people back to the intranet for more information but will also help to reinforce key messages."

## 5.7 Editor statistics

Editors are those employees who write for the intranet by either creating or editing pages. Editors are typically a rare breed; comprising less than 1% of employees. There were exceptions though. Two organizations supported a distributed publishing model where around 5% of employees had edited pages on the intranet.

The following table identifies some basic statistics related to intranet editors:

Table 2 - Editor statistics.

Metric	News page	Content page
Average visits for "edited" pages	N/A	20.62
Average visits for "compiled" pages	N/A	5.25
Average visitors per page	5.67	13.83
Top 10 average page visitors	1,210	11,357
Average # of pages per editor	28.35	12.40
Ratio of content page vs news page editors	3.7 content pages for every 1 news page	



Some identifiable patterns:

- Pages with customized text attract **four times** more visitors than pages compiled from already existing, or compiled, content.
- News pages exhibit the same blockbuster/long tail patterns of readership we see on popular internet news sites. Most popular intranet news articles attract 200+ times the number of visitors than the average news article.
- Content pages attract, on average, more visitors. The “blockbuster” effect is even more extreme with the most visited pages attracting more than 1,000 times the average visitor rate.
- Content page editors outnumbered news page editors nearly four to one.
- News page editors edited on average 28 pages; more than double those of content page editors.




## Identifying your most Influential Editors



Head to either the “Essentials” or “Behaviour” tab in [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) and you’ll find the Influential Editors report.

### Influential Editors



Editor	Reach	Pages	Edits
 User	3,160	2	5
 User	2,391	1	1
 User	418	1	1

The Influential Editors report shows which editors have created or modified pages that have reached the most visitors, along with the number of pages they’ve edited and how many times. You can use this to check if these people have had the support and training to help develop the best content.

## 5.8 How much does intranet page health relate to visitor attraction?

It should be no surprise to find that a healthy intranet attracts more visitors. Identifying what elements of a healthy intranet have the most effect is worth knowing. We undertook a statistical correlation analysis to identify the relative association between the elements of a healthy intranet page (Engagement, Experience and Quality – see Table 1 - Health Score Composition) and the number of unique visitors they attract.

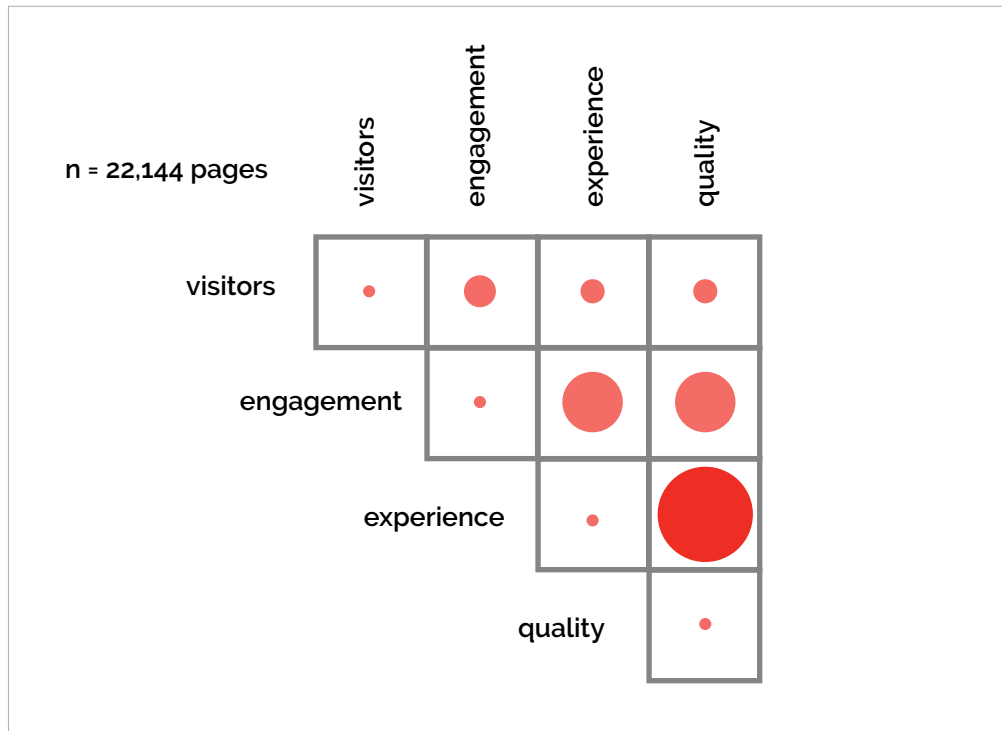


Figure 10 - Correlation matrix.

The bottom line is that all dimensions of the page health score are highly correlated with attracting more unique visitors.

The size and color intensity of the circles identifies the relative strength of correlation between the identified dimensions. The strongest correlations exist between the three health dimensions of engagement, experience and quality. This speaks to the strength of the overall health measure, given these measures are constructed from quite unrelated components.

The key correlations are shown in the top row; showing the association of health dimensions with the number of unique visitors attracted. Engagement shows the strongest correlation. That is, pages that are able to sustain longer visitor attention are likely to attract more unique visitors. Strong associations also exist for experience and quality. All correlations are comfortably statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

# Intranet pages don't need to be pretty, they need to be up-to-date and work

A beautifully designed intranet page looks great, but the reality is, it's useless – and an expensive time waster – if it doesn't clearly provide the information employees are looking for.

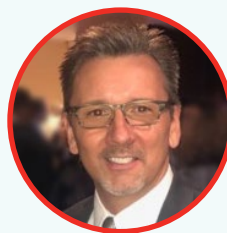
For an intranet to be successful – that is, for it to work for employees - pages need to be up-to-date, easy to use and capable of driving an action.

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking study of SharePoint intranets found the quality of intranet pages correlates with the number of visitors coming to the page. Higher quality = more visitors. Both content and news pages with custom made content attract four times as many visits as pages using already existing, or compiled, content.

We also found "content" pages – like HR pages, leave applications, travel expenses - as opposed to "news" pages, get three times more visits.

With these findings in mind, we asked the world's premier intranet thought leaders and specialists how intranet managers can ensure their content is high quality and up to date.

**Chris Harrer**, Assistant Vice President, Internal Communications – Digital, at US-based technology and entertainment giant **Comcast**, says it's usually the "content" pages that drive people to the intranet in the first place, and they must be up to date.



"Proper design and layout play a key role in all pages on your intranet," Chris said.

"No one wants to see a poorly designed page that doesn't flow."

Having said that, "content" pages must provide the information people need, and while "news" pages provide a snapshot of something happening in the moment, they may be more "nice to know" rather than essential for information.

"Feel good stories and culture building news is always needed to drive positive culture and engagement, but the 'content' pages are where the information lies that people search out and look for to learn or drive an action (generally)," Chris said.

"Content pages also need to be updated from time to time, if not regularly, so people know that the content is up-to-date and recent. Sometimes a refresh of content needs to also be redesigned to drive engagement as well."



**Suzie Robinson**, a specialist at UK-based intranet consultancy **ClearBox Consulting**, likens a poor-looking intranet to an office covered in rubbish, with old posters on the wall and cracks in the ceiling - you wouldn't want to go there!

"The equivalent in intranet form won't inspire people to visit and highlights the need for intranets to be loved," she said.

Suzie has seen organizations looking to replace intranet software, when what they really needed was a good tidy-up and governance put in place.

"Sometimes an overhaul and fresh start will help, but if there aren't processes in place to maintain it then the intranet will get messy again," Suzie said.

"Governance doesn't need to be onerous or complex, but roles and expectations need to be clear."

Suzie says documenting those who are responsible and accountable for pages is vitally important to an intranet's success, as is their commitment to their responsibilities. There should also be automatic archiving of old or unloved content to reduce the burden on those responsible for content.

"It's an old saying but still relevant here: 'content is king'. In my opinion, while responsibility for content should reside with those who are experts on their subject, ensuring the design and copy is appropriate is something experts within the intranet team should at least influence or potentially control," Suzie said.

She said even if there aren't dedicated resources for an intranet team, there will be people across the organization who could add their expertise to the overall intranet management committee.

"Although the upcoming (Microsoft 365) Copilot releases for SharePoint may well enable more people to create attractive pages, intranet managers should still make time to edit and sign off on content spaces," Suzie said.

Like Suzie, Microsoft SharePoint and M365 specialist **Susan Hanley** says governance is the most important thing intranet managers can do to ensure their content is high quality and up to date.



"Content management responsibility needs to be incorporated into job descriptions and performance goals for all publishers," she said.

"But in addition, we can't overlook training. Most people creating SharePoint pages have absolutely no background in creating web pages or writing web content.

"I think Designer for SharePoint should be able to help with this – but I am very concerned that we might get beautiful crappy pages instead of just crappy pages."

Susan said the key to high quality content is training and perhaps better templates. "Embed the training for how to create great page content in the page template and give people templates for different types of content that are bespoke to the organization," she said.



**James Robertson**, owner of Australian-based intranet consultancy **Step Two**, says the single most effective thing that can be done to improve intranet content is to establish a vibrant "authoring community of practice" which encompasses the central intranet team and everyone involved in creating and maintaining content.

This needs to be a true community, not just a support line or a communications channel to authors. James listed the benefits of such a group as:

- Fostering a shared sense of ownership of the intranet and the content it contains.
- Providing an effective mechanism to strengthen the knowledge and capabilities of authors to produce quality content.
- Reducing the reliance on one-to-one support of authors by the central team, because the entire group can be engaged.
- Building on natural "group dynamics" to encourage greater time commitment from authors.
- Encouraging peer support within the group, which is invaluable as the number of authors increases.
- Enabling the whole group to be kept in the loop, regarding major intranet projects or ongoing incremental changes.
- Providing resilience to the natural coming-and-going of authors and ensuring continuity of engagement.
- Providing a forum that valuable information can be shared with for the benefit of all.

**Jonathan Phillips**, co-founder of **Lithos Partners**, a UK-based digital communication and collaboration consultancy, says the best intranets define and, critically, enforce content standards so users have confidence that any page they land on is up-to-date and easy to read.



"For best results we recommend clear, documented content guidelines and using the functionality of the CMS (content management system) itself to maintain compliance using templates and prompts," he said.

"But this all works best where editors and contributors understand the purpose of content standards and their own role in maintaining them. So training is vital."



When every page looks the same on the intranet, it's hard to differentiate relevant content, says **Jamie Stokes**, Director, Digital Communications at **Cox Enterprises**, America's largest private broadband company.

“Content teams need to customize and give employees a reason to click,” Jamie advises.

“Stay in the sweet spot for article length, entice with engaging headlines and break up the text with relevant images and calls to action. This can be achieved on pages and news.”

**Jonas Bladt Hansen**, co-founder of Danish internal communications consultancy **Next Level IC**, agrees it is crucial to regularly review and update the content on intranet pages, especially those with the highest traffic.



“Each page should focus on a single topic, have concise text, and clear calls to action,” he said.

“Additionally, analyzing user interactions on the pages is essential to ensure they align with the intended user journey.”

## 5.9 What devices do employees use to access the intranet?

Somewhat surprisingly, non-desktop device access to the intranet is a small minority. Perhaps the nature of SharePoint intranet information does not lend itself to “small screen” consumption?

Table 3 - Device usage.

Device	%
Desktop	99.76
Phone	0.22
Tablet	0.02

*(Note: We were surprised by this finding and wonder if our cohort of seven organizations either doesn't support access via mobile devices, that it is too hard to access the intranet via mobile device, or that the content or news pages are just not relevant “on the go”. Perhaps people access specific systems like timesheets or rosters on mobile, but not the SharePoint intranet pages?)*

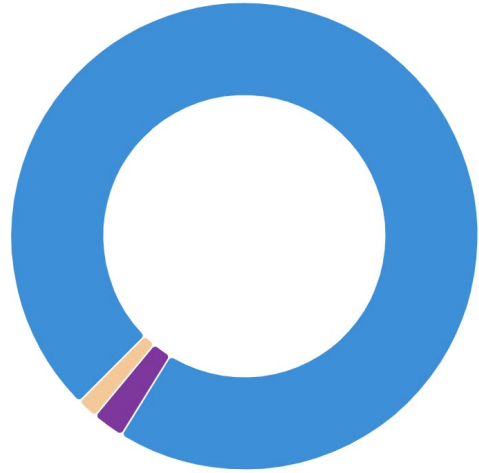
## Device breakdown

In [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#), our Device Activity report shows what percentage of visitors are using a computer, tablet or mobile device to access your intranet.



Head to the “Audience” tab of your dashboard to get the report.

### Device Activity



Desktop

96%



Mobile

2%



Tablet

1%

# Are you wasting your time designing intranet access for mobile devices?



**Do you spend time designing your intranet to be accessible to employees on their phones and mobile devices? If so, it seems you're probably wasting your time!**

The reality is, virtually no one seems to access the company intranet via their mobile phone.

SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of SharePoint intranets found a whopping 99.76% of employees access the intranet via their desktop. Only 0.22% of employees access the intranet via their phone and 0.02% by a tablet.

We were more than a little surprised by these numbers, so we reached out to the world's premier intranet thought leaders and specialists to see if our real-life data from 36,400+ intranet pages matched their experience.

Turns out, it pretty much does.



**Sharon O'Dea** and **Jonathan Phillips**, co-founders of UK-based digital communication and collaboration consultancy **Lithos Partners**, said SWOOP's findings align with their own extensive experience, and asked if it's time to question the focus on poor intranet mobile access rates. Really, who wants to read a long work-related article on their mobile phone?

"We've rolled out tens of mobile-enabled or optimized intranets ourselves, and have data on many more from our own DWXS study (Digital Workplace Experience Study), and few have seen high levels of mobile usage, even where high demand might be expected," Sharon said.



"Businesses often make the intranet available to personal devices, but mobile experiences are generally poor, especially for long read content and applications."

Sharon said organizations often work hard to make the intranet available to users on personal mobiles, but this isn't always matched by demand.

"Nor by any consideration of what users might actually want to read on their mobiles," she said.



"In reality, mobile intranets tend to be used primarily for transactional tasks.

"Reading SWOOP's findings made us ask: are we as an industry overfocusing on the mobile? Is it really the way employees want to interact with the intranet?"



**Chris Harrer**, Assistant Vice President, Internal Communications – Digital, at US-based technology and entertainment giant **Comcast** with almost 190,000 employees, says mobile intranet access has always been difficult due to multi-factor authentication and security logins.

"If accessing the intranet on the go, you are going for a reason to accomplish something and as soon as you hit that login, you're done," he summarized.

"Desktop access is always seamless with no login required. Also, desktop access is usually more geared towards knowledge/office workers that have more time to go to the intranet than the mobile or frontline workforce."

However, Chris' initial findings for Comcast's new global intranet with Microsoft Teams integration via Viva Connections showed 30% of Viva Connections users were accessing the mobile experience.

"One reason for this could be that there is no more log in," he said.

"You're already in the Teams app on your mobile device and logged into the ecosystem and just a click away from the intranet with no login required."

Chris said a majority of the mobile usage was going to the "feed" of Viva Connections, which is the personalized news and Viva Engage feed.

"Overall, whether desktop or mobile, your communications strategy should not change," Chris advised.

"Your writing approach and formatting of content may need to be adjusted, but your content strategy should not change and should still be geared towards the business objectives."

Microsoft SharePoint and M365 specialist **Susan Hanley** said SWOOP's finding of extremely low mobile phone intranet access is completely consistent with her experience.



She suggested one reason for the low rate could be because people haven't been travelling, or been "mobile", during the past three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"But even pre-COVID, none of my clients were seeing a lot of mobile use of the intranet," Susan said.

"I suspect that this answer might be different for frontline workers, but I still haven't found a client that is providing easy intranet access to frontline workers.

"This finding doesn't surprise me at all!"



It's the chicken and egg situation when it comes to intranets on mobile, says [Suzie Robinson](#), a specialist at UK-based intranet consultancy [ClearBox Consulting](#).

Mobile usage is low, so there isn't a focus on developing the mobile experience.

Because the mobile experience is poor, people don't access the intranet on mobile. And SharePoint intranet remains somewhat lacking when it comes to mobile access.

"However, I believe that allowing people to access the intranet from wherever they are is incredibly valuable," Suzie said.

Imagine, Suzie says, if people could check their vacation allowance while discussing a travel agent's deal with their partner at home – with the policy on the intranet, an integration to Workday to allow them to check their remaining vacation days, and a simple form to complete to request the time off.

"Or, more simply, using a mobile as a second screen during a Teams call to check reference materials," she said.

"All of these are use cases we've seen with clients and offer more purpose to an intranet app than simply being somewhere to read news."

Suzie said organizations with frontline workers are more likely to be addressing mobile tools.

"Desk-based and deskless audiences should...be addressed separately with tools and devices that are most appropriate to their needs, but they should be able to speak to each other and have access to the same quality of information/tools," she said.

Most intranets are designed to be used on desktops, says [Jonas Bladt Hansen](#), co-founder of Danish internal communications consultancy [Next Level IC](#), and the reality is, the SharePoint mobile app has limitations.



"The (SharePoint mobile app) user experience is underwhelming, and it doesn't help when the pages are not designed for mobile use with short text and clear call to actions, which is rarely the case," he said.

"Often, there is too much information on the page, which can work on a laptop but certainly not on mobile."

Jonas also notes the use cases for accessing the intranet on mobile phones and the desktop are usually different.

“The needs for people on the go focus on getting specific tasks done and only features/ templates and information that assists them with this is really helpful,” he said.

“And today it’s rarely the case that SharePoint intranets are able to assist with that.”

Jonas says intranet managers have several options:

- Recognize that SharePoint’s mobile experience might not boost user adoption and consider vendors offering a superior mobile experience.
- Prioritize understanding the unique needs of mobile intranet users and design accordingly.
- Enhance the mobile experience through personalization, and use targeted push notifications to relay pertinent work-related information.

The low mobile usage to access the intranet came as no surprise to **Jamie Stokes**, Director, Digital Communications at **Cox Enterprises**, America’s largest private broadband company.

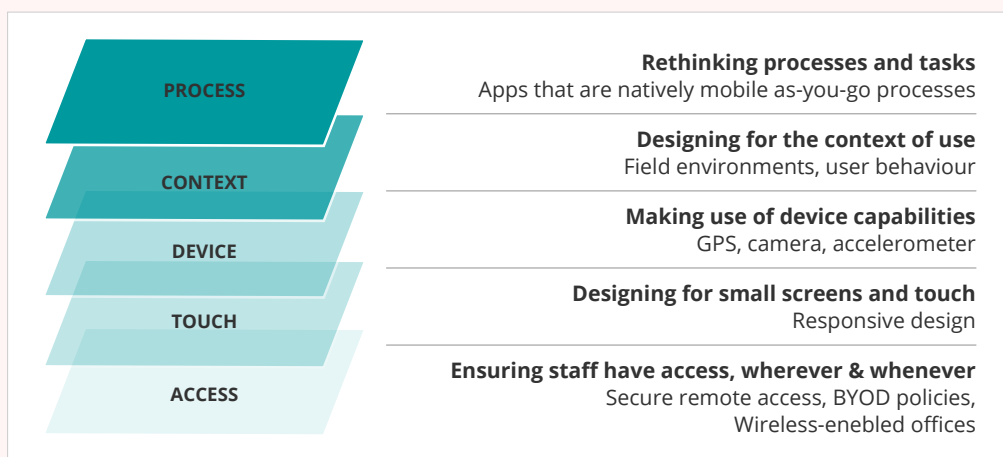


However, Cox Enterprise has mobile intranet usage within the 8-9% range.

Jamie believes there is a variety of factors around mobile intranet usage including easy access and whether employees have personal or company mobile devices.

She also suggests a separate content strategy for desktop and field workers to boost mobile intranet engagement.

Australian-based intranet consultancy **Step Two** has developed a framework for enterprise mobility - the **five layers of enterprise mobile design**.



Owner of Step Two, **James Robertson**, says it’s clear that challenges still remain around access, the lowest level. Licenses may not be available for frontline workers, or they may not have the necessary devices.



In relation to SWOOP Analytics’ finding about intranet mobile usage, James said we’re largely talking about the “touch” layer.

“Are people using their responsively designed intranet on mobile devices? While SharePoint Modern makes this pretty easy to do, it’s questionable whether there’s a compelling what’s-in-it-for me factor for mobile workers,” James said.

“Reading corporate news may not be enough, and scrolling through a 25-page policy in a SharePoint document library is a non-starter.

“For us, the challenge and opportunity for M365-based intranets is to deliver more relevant and functional experiences for frontline workers, that understand the ‘context’ and ‘process’.”

James said he sees usage of SharePoint intranets via mobile devices continuing to languish until intranets are better targeted to the needs and activities of field and frontline workers.

## 5.10 Is there an optimal length for news articles?

The guidance on ideal news article lengths for the internet range from 300 to 800 words. Is the intranet any different? To test this, we ranked news pages by the number of unique visitors they achieved over two to three months. These rankings were then divided into deciles.

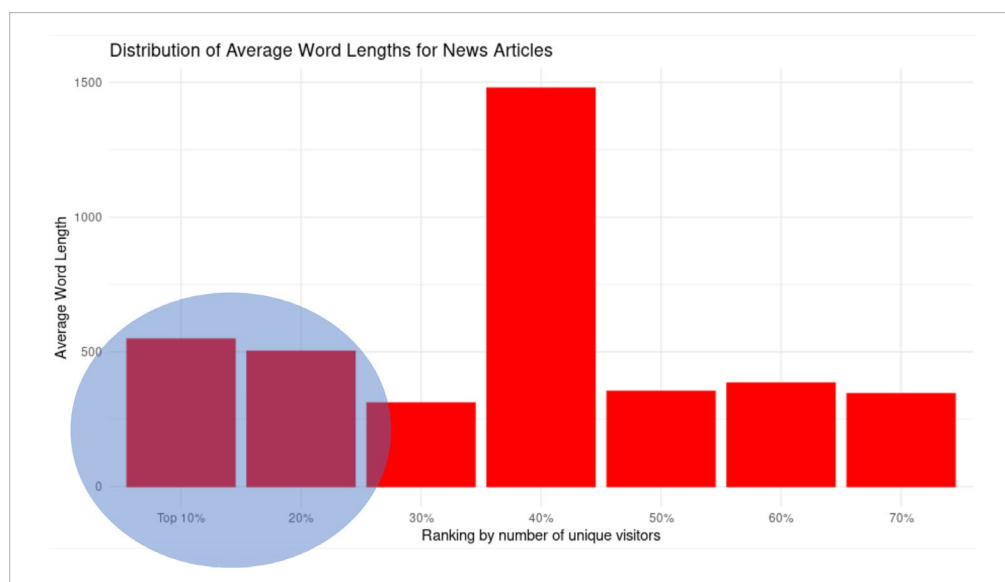


Figure 11 - Optimal length for news articles.

The top ranking 20% of news articles averaged around 500 words; which appears to be a sweet spot. Oddly, the 30-40% decile average article length was close to 1,500 words, suggesting that longer articles do get some support. At remaining lower deciles, averages around the 300-word count appear not to be sufficient.

# How long should an intranet news article be?

**500 words! That's the sweet spot for the length of an intranet news article. And longer is better than shorter. Surprised? We were! Isn't the general consensus that short, concise news articles are better?**

Still, it's hard to argue with real life data. So, we took this finding to our panel of intranet experts and thought leaders from around the world to get their take on it.

Most weren't at all surprised. As a generality, the world's top intranet thought leaders said **articles of about 300 words looked like social media posts, while articles of 500-1000 words actually had relevant content for employees to consume.** The "What's In It For Me" articles always get the most engagement.

What we found about the length of news articles in SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking study of SharePoint intranets:

- The top ranking 20% of news articles averaged around 500 words; which appears to be the sweet spot.
- Perhaps surprisingly, there isn't a big drop off in readership if an article stretches to 1,500 words.
- News articles with 300 words or less had the least engagement.

**Suzie Robinson**, consultant at specialist intranet consultancy **ClearBox Consulting**, says shorter articles being less popular than longer articles doesn't surprise her because the short articles look like social media posts or feel "less important" since time hasn't been spent writing something longer.



**"Where there are short pieces of news, I'd suggest either gathering them together into a theme, or potentially consider a different channel to share them,"** Suzie advised.

"Otherwise, the opening would have to effectively explain why a vital topic is being covered in so few words.

"Alternatively, if the shorter messages are associated with a systems outage or a product recall, then these should be presented in a different manner to news so that people understand the urgency behind the message.

"This will also stop publishers feeling the need to pad out what should be simple messaging."

When writing an intranet news article, Suzie suggests aiming for one Microsoft Word page.





**Chris Harrer**, Assistant Vice President, Internal Communications – Digital, at US-based technology and entertainment giant **Comcast** with almost 190,000 employees, has done his own internal research on the optimal length of intranet news articles and agrees around 500 words, or more, gets the most engagement.

“My previous research also showed that there was not a drop off when the article went beyond the 1,000-word range but sometimes increased,” Chris said.

“There are many factors to consider with the word count metric and it depends on the type of content that is being assessed. The WIFM (what’s in it for me) content that is very important to an employee about benefits, or some type of perk, will always outperform other content nine times out of 10 no matter what length.

**“But for your everyday company content, the 500-word mark is the best approach.”**

**Jonas Bladt Hansen**, co-founder of Danish internal communications consultancy **Next Level IC**, says one reason shorter news articles may receive less engagement is that they often don’t provide much more information than what’s already in the headline.



“Having said that, **internal communications and intranet managers can leverage this knowledge by training themselves and their content editors to keep articles concise and within the range of 500 words,**” he said.



**Jonathan Phillips**, co-founder of **Lithos Partners**, a UK-based digital communication and collaboration consultancy, points out that average silent reading rates for adults are 300 words per minute. Therefore, a 500-word article is a 1.5 minute read.

“That’s perfect for ‘fillers’ in between work activity – reflecting work patterns,” Jonathan said.

“People spend a limited amount of time on the intranet. **Internal communicators can make optimal use of that time by keeping articles short, allowing for a higher number of articles per day to be consumed** – better for IC (internal communication) teams.”

Jonathan’s fellow co-founder at **Lithos Partners**, **Sharon O’Dea**, says intranets are typically accessed between other tasks, perhaps while opening a browser window.



“The concise articles you might consume in these moments are ‘FYI’ - they’re typically just informational, so it’s no surprise they don’t prompt engagement,” Sharon said.

“Long-form content doesn’t fit in these short windows of opportunity. That doesn’t mean they don’t have a place – long reads are often appreciated if they’re adding value and color – but all content should respect the readers’ time.

"You could make these work better for both audiences by **labelling long reads so people can return to them in longer browsing sessions, while including a summary of key points so the message isn't missed by time-pressed audiences.**"



Microsoft SharePoint and M365 specialist [Susan Hanley](#) was surprised by the 500-word sweet spot finding. In her vast experience, Susan said she's found 400 words is the magic mark. More importantly, Susan says the measure should be about engagement.

"I don't think comments or likes should count – **the true measure of engagement is whether the article generated the intended action,**" she said.

"I'm not sure why fewer than 300 words gets less engagement – maybe fewer words feels less substantive? I feel like maybe more data could be helpful here or maybe a broader audience to see whether this is true for organizations of all sizes."

That's exactly what we intend to provide when SWOOP Analytics does a more in-depth analysis of SharePoint intranets in 2024.

[Jamie Stokes](#), Director, Digital Communications at [Cox Enterprises](#), America's largest private broadband company, also gravitated towards the shorter articles of 300-500 words as the sweet spot from her experience.



"Our findings showed that highly engaged articles on our intranet contained 300-500 words," Jamie said.

"Other contributors to successful articles included photos with employees, videos and article headlines 20-60 characters in length and conveyed 'what's in it for me!'"

## 5.11 What does the read time distribution look like for very popular news articles?

To better understand the nature of engagement with very popular news articles, we analyzed the most popular news article from our sample of more than 14,000 news pages.

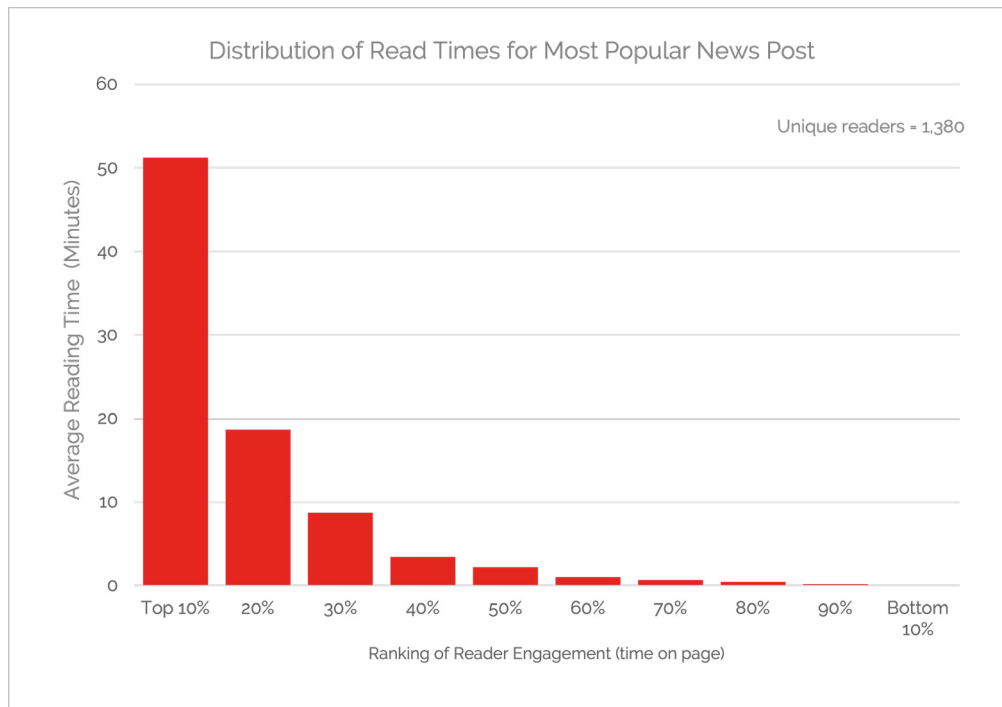


Figure 12 - Read time distribution.

We can see the top 10% most engaged readers spent on average 50 minutes on the page. This is consistent with the correlation analysis, which showed strong page engagement resulting in more unique readers. 50% of visitors spent at least two minutes on the page.

## 5.12 How much news should you publish and when?

For internal communications employees, this is an enduring question. Does more news equal more engagement? What type of news achieves the most engagement? When should we publish? Day of week? Hour of day?

Is more better? In general, the more news articles published the more readers overall you will get. Two organizations with a high news pages/employee ratio achieved more than 60% of employees reading news. There were exceptions though, and therefore news page health does matter.

We have previously determined that healthy news pages of around the 500-word length are best placed to attract more readers, and we spoke to some of the benchmarking participants to find out what the most popular news items were. Here are some typical examples:



- CEO announcement
- Major business event or initiative
- Organizational results e.g. quarterly results
- Diversity and inclusion
- Summaries of organizational news

How long should we expect a news article to sustain reader interest?

The examples below provide a number of insights. Firstly, the top chart shows the natural life of a news article lasts about a week. In this case we can see the post was made on a Thursday, one day before the weekend. Unless the post is particularly time sensitive (for which Thursday is a good day), it might be better to post earlier in the week. Depending on the topic and context of each news article, the decay rates ranged from three days up to a few weeks.

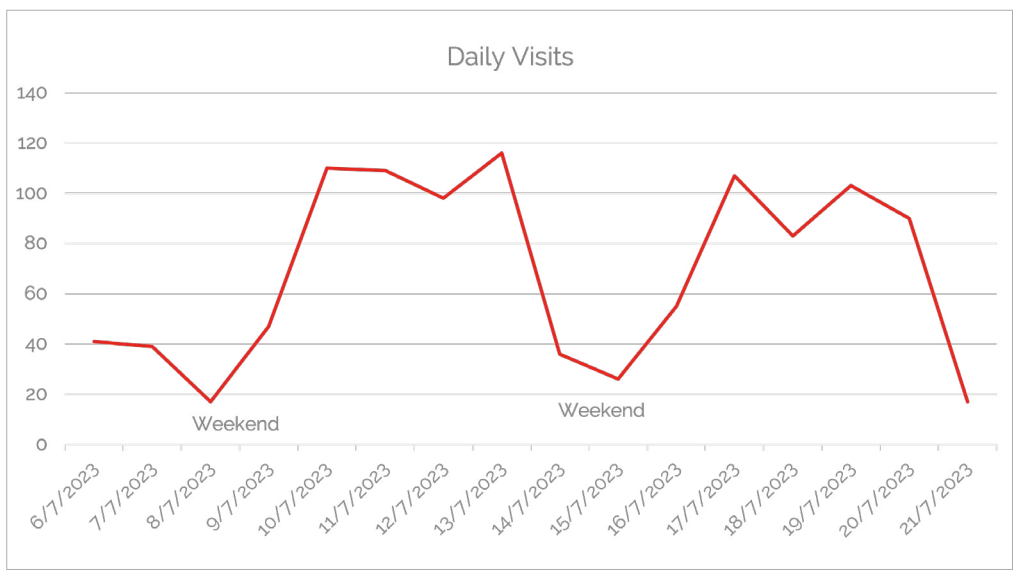
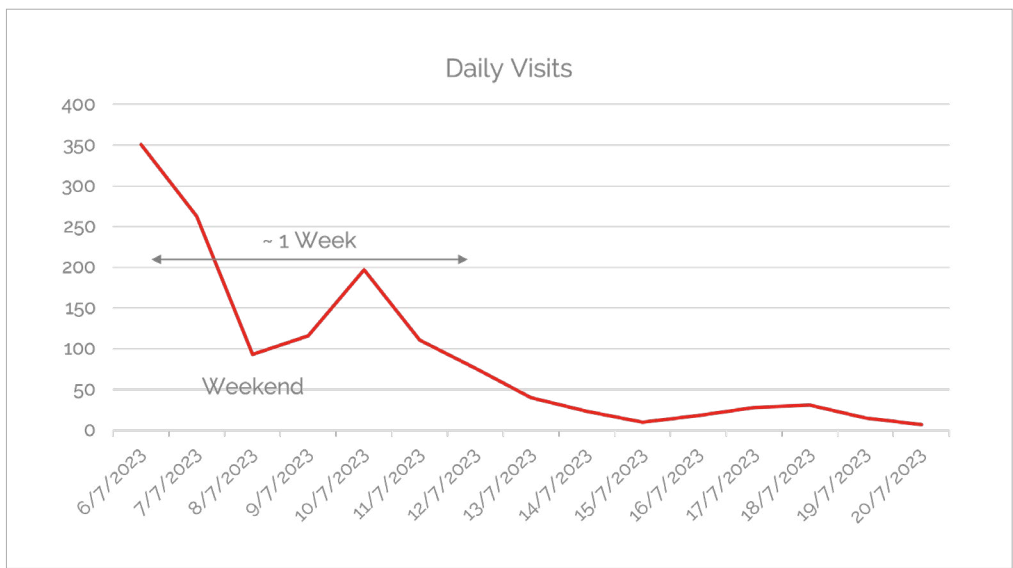


Figure 13 - Example visits over time.

The bottom chart does not show a natural decay. This is because we found from participant feedback that news pages like the above are used to share news clippings with a fast turnaround. Like a daily newspaper, the engagement is consistently high; a good way to sustain fresh interest in the intranet. We found only two of the seven organizations had a page with this non-decaying pattern from their most visited pages.

Some general rules of thumb:

- Unless time sensitive, it is best to post earlier in the week to avoid the disrupted attention of a weekend.
- A summary of organizational news pages, often featuring headlines from news articles, is a good way to provide a more dynamic space for visitors to come back to regularly.
- Messages from management/executives/leadership related to major business events are regularly the most attractive topics for news.
- Other popular topics of general societal interest like diversity and inclusion, sustainability, etc., especially when matched with Viva Engage discussions, can be a particularly powerful employee engagement instrument.
- Schedule your news posts with the understanding that for most news posts, interest levels would have dropped to a level around day three, where fresher news content is required.
- An engaging news post aimed to sustain a reader's attention should be around 500 words long and be on topics of enterprise-wide appeal.

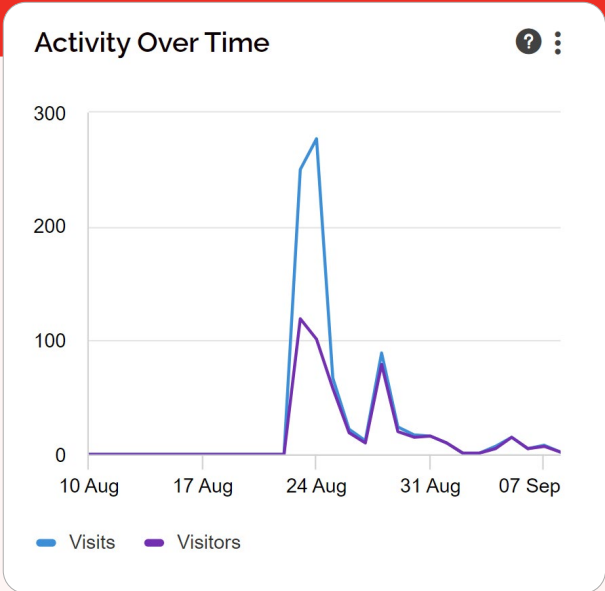
### Checking your news item's active life.

In [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#), our Activity Over Time report can help you understand how long visitors are interested in your news item.



**Either select a news item from the "Top News" report, or search for it in the "Page" dashboard and then head to the "Essentials" or "Behaviour" tab.**

The report shows both the total visits each day and the number of visitors. If there is a large gap between the two lines it suggests people are returning to re-read the news. However, if the lines are close together then it's more likely that visitors are only reading the news item once.



## What to do when *news* becomes *old news*

When does “news” on your intranet become “old news”? SWOOP Analytics’ benchmarking of SharePoint intranet data found it’s about a week before news starts to decay. So, what do you do with this “old” news?

We reached out to the world’s premier intranet thought leaders and specialists to ask their advice on how to keep intranet news pages relevant, and when to archive “old” news.

Most suggest **archiving old news after about 12 months, otherwise it will keep appearing in searches, and chances are, it will contain outdated information.** The most important thing to remember about searchable old news is to ensure it’s updated if information has changed, or mark it as being old/outdated news.

**Jamie Stokes**, Director, Digital Communications at [Cox Enterprises](#), America’s largest private broadband company, said news articles older than a year are moved to a non-searchable SharePoint folder.



“This removed them from the employee search experience, but gave content owners the ability to refer back to them as needed,” Jamie said.

“We chose the one-year mark, as content cycles tend to be cyclical, and we didn’t want an article from the same series or event to appear in search twice (from this year and the previous year).

“This process allowed us to remove thousands of old articles and kept our search experience ‘clean’.”



**Chris Harrer**, Assistant Vice President, Internal Communications – Digital, at US-based technology and entertainment giant [Comcast](#), waits 13 months to archive old news, waiting that extra month for the same reason Cox Enterprises chooses to archive within 12 months.

“The reason for the odd month is that with benefits and bonus news, those items are usually an annual occurrence, and that allows for the extra time to either reuse a benefits article or reference it prior to it archiving,” Chris said.



"Then once that season is over its archived and taken out of search, so the most recent article is the only one that appears in search. But most articles should be about a year for reference."

**Suzie Robinson**, a specialist at UK-based intranet consultancy **ClearBox Consulting**, says there's no harm with the popularity of a news page dwindling after a week, as long as it's easy to find in search results.



"There's value in having an archive of old news on the intranet to show activity over time, to show new people a history to the business, and to highlight culturally important topics," she said.

"However, it's not worth hanging onto things that are just not relevant."

Suzie also suggested archiving news after about a year, unless it relates to a topic that has broader longevity, for example, when there are new product launches.

"If the organization is going through a period of change, then articles could stay active longer, or conversely if the same topic is being raised multiple times (COVID during 2020, for example) then archiving old news sooner also makes sense," she said.

Search analytics will help show what topics are still relevant, and where old news is being presented too high in results. Performing searches to test popular search terms will also show where there's clutter, allowing intranet managers to remove anything that is irrelevant.

Suzie said SWOOP Analytics' finding that news starts to decay after a week is a reminder of the need to repeat messages.

"Saying something once doesn't mean that it has landed, or landed well, with the audience and news isn't necessarily old just because it drops off the home page," she said.

"Important messages should be repeated or remain on the home page of an intranet until they are no longer relevant. Links to intranet articles from Viva Engage, digital signage, or something similar will help extend the longevity of the article."



**Jonas Bladt Hansen**, co-founder of Danish internal communications consultancy **Next Level IC**, also suggests extending the reach of news or articles by sharing them in newsletters, or across other platforms.

"Instead of solely posting on the intranet and expecting traffic, explore other avenues to promote your content," Jonas said.

"Drawing inspiration from marketing and sales teams, who excel at driving traffic with engaging content, can be beneficial."

[Jonathan Phillips](#), co-founder of [Lithos Partners](#), a UK-based digital communication and collaboration consultancy, agrees about a year is the right time to archive news.



He also suggests labelling outdated news so people know the information is old.

“Old news is rarely helpful and often misleading,” Jonathan said.

“We recommend labelling older news stories – like you see on some news websites – so readers can see they’re out of date and may have been superseded.”

He says robust content governance is critical.

“Governance has a huge impact on user experience,” Jonathan said.

“Search works brilliantly well when your intranet only has one page and declines as we add more content. Content life cycling – and particularly content archiving – is critical to the overall intranet health.”



Microsoft SharePoint and M365 specialist [Susan Hanley](#) recommends archiving old news somewhere between six and twelve months, unless the content is no longer correct. If it’s outdated content, Susan recommends deleting it so it isn’t accidentally discovered via search.

“As your intranet ‘matures’, it seems reasonable to ask news authors to update an archive date (a default that they can override) so that we can automate the process,” she said.

“It’s important to make sure that communicators don’t use news posts to replace durable content pages because then there may be a need to retain news articles longer.

“If the content is durable, it should be on a durable page in an appropriate location. The news post should help advertise or introduce or amplify the durable content – but it shouldn’t be the *only* place durable information is posted.

“The news article should go away, but the durable content should remain – and be updated as needed.”

## 5.13 People who read this also read...

This prominent marketing device, made famous by Amazon in its early book selling years, has now become a standard practice for online book sellers and libraries. When it comes to intranets, the same techniques can be applied to provide fresh insights into how best to link your intranet pages, but also to better understand your audience.

Intranet guru and founder of digital design firm [Step-Two, James Robertson](#) thinks SharePoint Online is quite different to traditional intranets. He states "[a top-to-bottom information architecture simply isn't expressed in SharePoint Online](#)". No single "corporate information architecture" and more focus on more fluid and natural ways of navigating to your required information.

### 5.13.1 User centered information architectures

To explore this notion we used page readership data from one large intranet site to identify how pages were connected by common readership groups. We then extracted the most connected pages and visualized them as a network graph. Each blue circle is a page. A connecting line between pages signifies a large number of common readers.

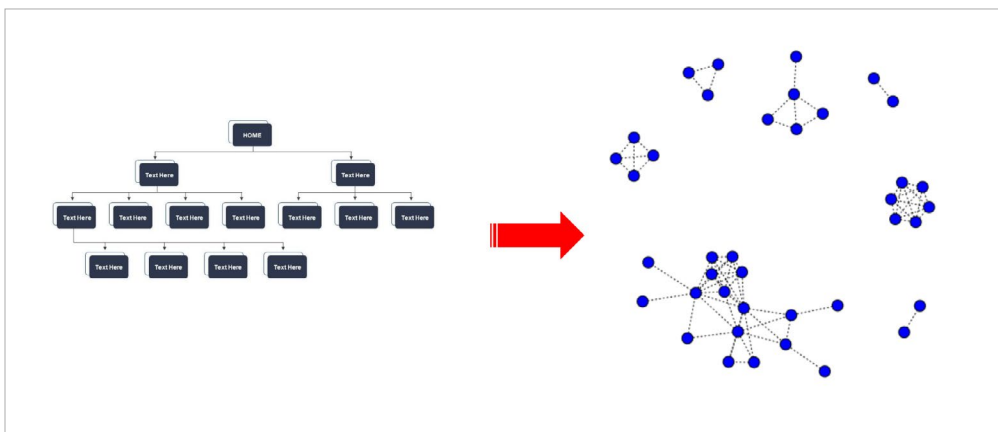


Figure 14 - Information architecture: from hierarchies to networks inferred from shared page readership.

In essence, this is the user centered "bottom up" information architecture Robertson talks about, but made real using readership data. This is in contrast with traditional "top down" hierarchical information architectures. Using this information, digital links can be used to make real connections between these pages to achieve a navigation scheme drawn from actual readership patterns; maximizing the user experience.

### 5.13.2 Audience categorization

As an added bonus this same process exposes reader cohorts i.e. just who are these readers that are reading the same pages? Again, we can visualize these individuals in a network graph, but this time the nodes are people, rather than pages.

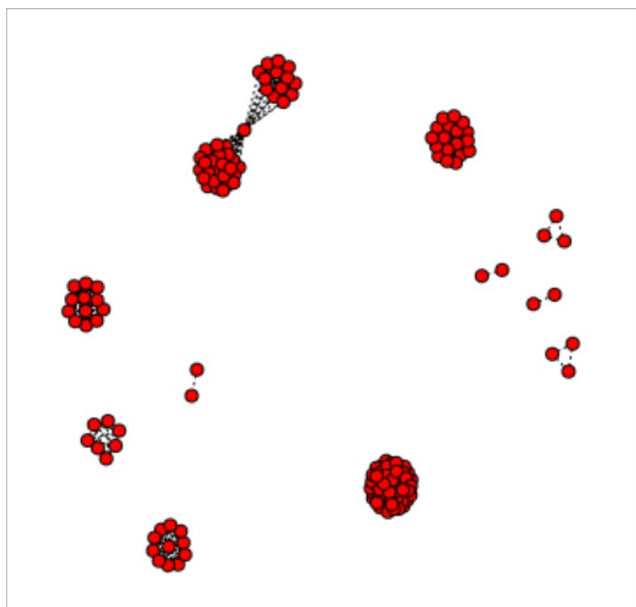


Figure 15 - Readership cohorts.

Can we see patterns in the readership cohorts identified? Do they speak to a need for more or better content to cater for their needs? Are there any gaps i.e. expected readership cohorts that are missing from the graph. Are they also under-catered for? Is the navigation to their intended content too complex or onerous?

The movement to more fluid and user-centered information architectures is easier said than done. Traditional top-down information architectures have had the benefit of generations of librarianship knowledge and experience.

New methods require new tools. At this time the affinity mapping methods used here are experimental. We would be happy to work with current or prospective SWOOP Analytics customers to explore their natural information architectures and readership cohorts, with a view to making it a feature of the product, should the demand justify it. Please [get in touch with us to join our research](#).

## 6 Case studies

The Syngenta logo, featuring the word "syngenta" in a dark blue, lowercase sans-serif font with a small green leaf icon above the letter 'y'. The logo is enclosed within a thin teal circular border.

### Syngenta – building a successful SharePoint Online intranet

Within days of launching a new out-of-the-box SharePoint Online intranet, the average time spent on agri-tech organization **Syngenta's** intranet home page increased from 0.3 seconds to 2 minutes and 40 seconds.

If you're an IT, HR or internal communications professional, you're probably (enviously) thinking; "How did they do that?"


The simple answer is that Syngenta moved from a complicated and customized intranet to a simple, minimalist SharePoint Online intranet that just worked.

Importantly, they listened to the end users and created an intranet people could use, that was up-to-date, had the information it's 38,000 people spread across 90 countries needed, and was easy to navigate.

Getting to this stage of launching a successful intranet took 10 months of work, about 30 (!!) different versions and came after years of battling with SharePoint 2010, followed by a bespoke intranet that was outsourced, difficult and slow to update, riddled with unnecessary complexities and failed to meet Syngenta's needs.

After months of steering committee meetings in 2022, and negotiations between the IT and internal communications departments, it was finally decided to use SharePoint Online to host the intranet. This decision was made partly because Syngenta was already paying for SharePoint with its M365 subscription and it could access immediate help and support from Microsoft, but mostly because using SharePoint Online allowed Syngenta to have its own in-house team working on, and updating, the intranet. Quick changes could be made, news could be updated – all within minutes rather than the months it sometimes previously took.

In December 2022, Syngenta launched the first version of the new SharePoint Online intranet, with the idea of later adding more features and functionalities and improving the design.

A circular portrait of Melinda Schaller, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a yellow top and a white scarf. The portrait is framed by a red circular border.

*Melinda Schaller,  
Global Intranet &  
Content Manager,  
IT Product Lead –  
Workplace Technologies,  
Syngenta.*



"When we launched it, we did some immediate feedback surveys and some focus groups and we were pleasantly surprised to learn that people actually liked the minimalist approach," Melinda said.

"We stripped out the complexities, we stripped out the things people weren't really engaging with or using anymore and they liked that. They didn't see any business value in simply going and adding more because we could or because we used to have that. "People liked the minimalistic approach."

After years of change during the COVID-19 pandemic, and as employees settled into hybrid work, the last thing they wanted was more change.

"The key thing people said was; 'It just works,'" Melinda said.

"They weren't used to having an intranet that was readily available, that functioned as it should, that was stable, that was easy to navigate. It was also faster and more available because SharePoint is a very fast solution."

**It just works...**

It looks very clean and works well! It is imperative that we take full advantage of the suite of tools that MS Office 365 offers to improve internal communications, so this was a very necessary move.

It look modernize and friendly.

Eye pleasing, It's not busy which is very attractive to me.

Doesn't look that different. Not sure I would have known such a major change was done if I didn't see the news on it. The layout of announcements (which I frequently check) is much different- but it's **easy to navigate**. Really appreciate that such a major change can be done so seamlessly!

Much faster load times - far fewer UI bugs on the home page.

It's easy usage.

Great. Almost all in one.

Really liked this new Look to MySyngenta SharePoint!!

It looks refreshing!

A bit different but easy to follow.

Brilliant - faster, more intuitive, more relevant. Well done team!

Clean and objective layout, really easy to find our main activities

Great site. Thanks for bringing new changes

Awesome Experience!

Simple and clean browsing interface.

Clean and objective layout, really easy to find our main activities!

Very happy, accomplished, with high expectations and knowing the company's internal process, simple and objective.

Impressive, a lot of information could be gained.

EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

Great look with new dimensions.

Easy user interface

Some of the feedback from end users about Syngenta Group's new SharePoint Online intranet.

The other key thing was the SharePoint Online intranet was easily accessible on all devices – phones, tablets, PCs.

**BUT...We listened to our people... and were pleasantly surprised!**

*...turns out people liked a minimalist approach*

*...and didn't see the value in adding more*

*...designing more*

*...or introducing another change!*

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white party hat and sunglasses, is smiling and holding a smartphone. She is surrounded by falling confetti, suggesting a celebratory or successful event. The background is a light, textured pattern.

## Measuring the “success” of an intranet

While the feedback from end users to the new SharePoint intranet was positive, the data also confirmed success.

Syngenta had been using analytics from [SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage](#) since 2016 so when [SWOOP Analytics](#) launched [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) in 2023, Syngenta was one of the early adopters.

Melinda said the time spent on Syngenta’s intranet home page when it first launched was a key indicator for success.

“We’d gone from people spending about 0.3 seconds on our home page to now spending almost 2 mins and about 40 seconds in those first couple of days of our launch,” she said.

“People wanted to engage with it because it was so easy to do so.”

After such positive feedback from end users, and data to reinforce it, the new intranet is no longer a “project” at Syngenta but a “product” to continue to manage, update and always improve.

“The intranet should never be done,” Melinda said.



**GROWTH IS NEVER DONE**

“New features and tools and functionality come out all the time and you want to be able to take advantage of those so that you can stay as up to date as possible.

“We constantly have a team behind it and we’re investing those time and resources to make sure that it is always 100% up to date and it’s reflecting the changing needs of our end users.”

## Measuring the “health” of an intranet

Syngenta is guided by data from **SWOOP Analytics** to know how pages are performing, what content needs improving and what people are engaging with.

“We’re looking a lot more at the data now that we finally have a robust analytics tool. **SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint** is able to tell us a more in-depth story about how the content is performing, how are people engaging with it, or even if they are engaging with it at all?”

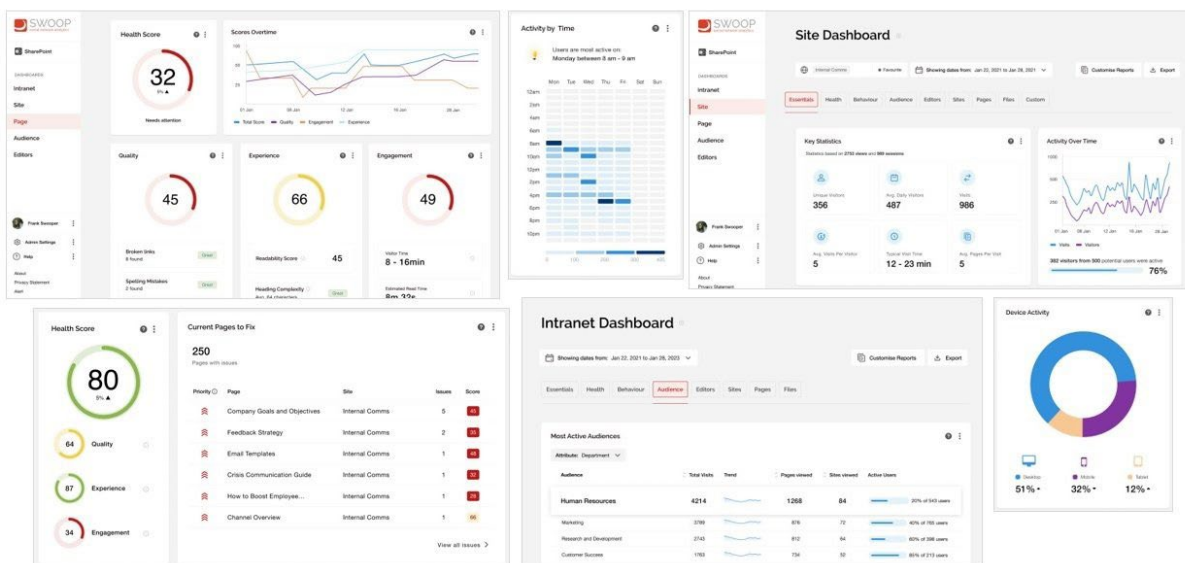
“Maybe they’re just not clicking on it? Are they reading it to the end? Whereabouts are they coming from, what language are they reading it in?”

**SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint** will tell you the health of content on the intranet – identifying spelling mistakes, convoluted or confusing sentences and whether people are engaging in the content.

“This is really helpful to inform the overall editorial strategy that helps the comms teams to decide which channel should I be posting my news on because we don’t just have an intranet, we also have Yammer (Viva Engage), (Microsoft) Teams and Kaltura (in-house video platform),” Melinda said.

“The analytics we can get from using SWOOP across SharePoint, Yammer and M365 is helping us to decide what is best placed on the intranet when it comes to news and internal comms and what should go elsewhere.”

### What’s next? SWOOP for SharePoint will be a key piece of the puzzle



## How to build a SharePoint intranet

For anyone contemplating creating a new SharePoint intranet, Melinda has a list of key takeaways.

- Inspire your stakeholders with what's possible today, tomorrow and in a year's time.
- Enrol your stakeholders – ensure they are aligned with you and on the same journey.
- Listen to your end users - the purpose of the intranet is to be there in the service of end users. Ask them; "What do you want to see on the intranet? What tools and services do you need there? What content would you engage with?"
- Functionality and reliability should always trump bells and whistles.
- Frequently analyse and act. "You can't do anything without good data and you can't make a business case for making any meaningful change unless you have data and analytics that is going to back up what you're saying," Melinda said. Data is vital to tell the full picture of how people are interacting and engaging.
- Move on from the project phase of building an intranet and move to an improvement phase and one of product management.
- Your intranet is never done. Keep improving and evolving it.

### Key takeaways

- Don't just engage your stakeholders: you must inspire them with what's possible today, tomorrow and what's coming in 12 months time
- Enrol your stakeholders – make sure they are on the same journey as you with aligned objectives
- Listen to your end users
- Bells and whistles don't equal good. Functionality and reliability will win out every time
- Frequently analyze and act. You can't make any valuable changes without listening to what the data says
- Get out of your project phase and into a continuous improvement mindset
- Your intranet is never done. And it shouldn't be!



*Melinda's key takeaways for a successful intranet.*

Melinda's final encouragement? "Just do it!," she said.

"Make a change that will be easier for your end users and help them with what they want to do at the end of the day and that is simply (to) work better."



**Watch Melinda explain the complete journey of Syngenta Group's intranet implementation:** <https://youtu.be/4k4x-6wLVWA>

# 7 Expert advice from intranet specialists and thought leaders

## 7.1 3 steps to maintain a healthy intranet

You've made the investment to create a company intranet and now comes the tricky part – making it successful and maintaining that success.

Microsoft SharePoint Collaboration Consultant and intranet expert [Susan Hanley](#) has three must-do tips to maintain and sustain a healthy intranet.

Forget about refreshing your entire intranet. With these three steps you'll never need a refresh to update your intranet because it will be a vital communications hub for your employees to access what's important to them and your organization.

### 1. Commit to governance

The best way to kill an intranet, Susan says, is to have a poor governance plan. If content is not regularly updated, the problems will keep cascading. Susan likens it to an orange. What would an orange smell like if you leave it and don't touch it? It would eventually stink.

"Your intranet gets really smelly when the content is old, and not just old, but when you put content in, update things and don't delete the old content that means search is going to find everything," Susan said.

"So if multiple versions of documents are floating around and come up via search, that's what's going to make your intranet much less useful."

Susan says there is no such thing as truly durable content, **all pages need to be reviewed and old versions of documents must be deleted to avoid discovery in searches.** You don't have to worry about document versions if you use built-in versioning – but does everyone do that? One way to help make sure pages get updated is to **expose the date when the page was last updated.** If the date is more than a year old, it's probably time to see if it needs an update.

"Content should always be current because that's what builds trust in the intranet – and ensures that it delivers ongoing and sustainable value," Susan said.

It's important to hold people accountable to ensure the intranet remains up to date. That can be done with the help of analytics, another of Susan's tips, but more on that later.



Susan Hanley,  
Microsoft SharePoint  
Collaboration Consultant

**Define roles and responsibilities to always keep the intranet updated. Make it part of a job description, add it to performance goals, and give people time to maintain content.** At the end of the day, it will save time because employees won't be searching old content or seeking help when they can't find what they need.

"If you're not going to commit to the care and feeding of your garden, then don't bother putting a garden in because you'll not get much value," Susan said.

"This is not extra work, it's a reallocation of the way you were doing it previously. If you commit to keeping the content up to date, you will gain the time back for other things.

"This is why a governance plan is so important. The whole organization clearly benefits when content is managed so recognize and demonstrate the importance of having up to date information for employees."

## 2. Publish content people care about

It doesn't matter what great yarn you might publish on your intranet if it's not of interest to your people. **Employees come to the intranet to get work done and to find out what they're interested in - so target information to them.** Maybe it starts with apps for submitting timesheets, or apps that display progress against sales targets or personal performance goals, or an app that shows how much vacation leave I have left. These are all reasons employees will go to the intranet and while they're there, they have an opportunity to read the latest company news and other information.

"It's not about what you want to tell, it's about what consumers want to learn," Susan said.

"Make sure that critical content is published on the intranet in a prominent place. Target the information to me based on something you know about me."

Of course, there's a place for corporate news on the intranet but ensure you make it worthwhile reading. **Start with a catchy title – something that describes an action or summarizes an event.** A post titled "CEO weekly update" probably isn't going to inspire many to read more but change it to "We've won a global award" and people will likely be interested to read on. And remember not to ramble. People usually want a succinct summary – up front at the top of the page.

"A healthy balance of 'me' and 'us' helps create a more meaningful intranet for everybody," Susan said.

"And while I'm there with all the apps I need, you can throw in some news and I might actually look at it."

If you're not sure what counts as news in your organization, stop and think about how you currently communicate to your people. Do you send emails with staff updates and new starters? How do you recognize employees? These can be simply turned into news stories and published on your intranet.

Another tip Susan shared is to do a weekly digest of “3 things you missed”. **Publish a weekly update digest and send via email with posts that point to content on your intranet to consolidate the most important things you’d like everyone in your organization to know.** It will become an easy go-to to find out the latest news. Make this list concise, short, and targeted. Many organizations see a very low “read rate” for organizational news sent via email. Try publishing it on your intranet and using email as a secondary channel.

“And then if I miss your email or if I delete it or forget to read it, it’s available to me when I’m searching the intranet,” Susan said.

“Give the people what they need and what they want and what’s personal to them.”

How do you know what people need and want? That’s where analytics come into play.

### 3. Use analytics to find out what works

What communication channels are actually reaching employees? What content are people engaging with? Without analytics, you’ll never know.

**“What channels are the most effective? That’s the most important contribution that analytics can bring to the table is which of the methods that we’re using is actually reaching.”** Susan said.

“Not only which method is reaching, but is there a certain type of content that gets read on different types of channels so we have a clue about what works in our organization? Is it the message plus the medium or is it the message alone or some combination thereof?”

It’s also important to know if who is sending the message makes an impact – the CEO, corporate comms, internal comms. Does adding a photo or video boost engagement? Susan says analytics are vital to help to identify where employees spend their time.

**Analytics are also needed to discover what people are searching for on the intranet.** Zero search results could mean that content is named incorrectly or content that people want is missing.

“Analytics give you data to demonstrate where you should be investing your time and investment. Without analytics, content placement and management is going to be about *someone’s* personal preference or politics,” Susan said.

“The only thing you can argue politics with is data, having the data to tell you where to focus your energy.”

Susan again uses the analogy of a garden to tend to an intranet.

“Care and feeding requires not just putting content in but aging content out and you can’t do that without the data to tell you what’s old or no longer useful,” she said.

"We're basically trying to say; 'Get the weeds out of your garden and focus on what's making it useful and engaging to the consumers'. The people who are going to come and look at your garden, you've got to tend to it because if you don't it will be full of weeds. The best way to do that is to learn from your data."

**People will use and return to the intranet if it helps them get work done.**

"If you're going to invest in it, it means you're going to have valuable content on it and that content needs to be maintained," Susan said.



Download Susan's free resource on [planning governance for a Microsoft 365-based intranet.](#)



## 7.2 Using SharePoint Online to build a great intranet



*Gemma Saint,  
Director, Customer  
Success and Growth  
(North America),  
SWOOP Analytics.*



### Using SharePoint Online to build a great intranet!

[Read article »](#)

Blog article written by  
GEMMA SAINT

First Things First:

## Purpose & Governance

Before diving into design,  
let's talk governance.

Who's going to manage this intranet marvel? How's IT going to back it up? If it's a decentralised setup, how are your content champs gonna shine? Who owns the content?

We need answers!



## Awesome Out-of-the-Box

# Power

Say goodbye to clunkiness!

With SharePoint's out-of-the-box web parts, you're basically an intranet magician.

Create an accessible, visually pleasing hub that sings with functionality. And guess what? If the layout's not vibing, switch it up!

Flexibility for the win!

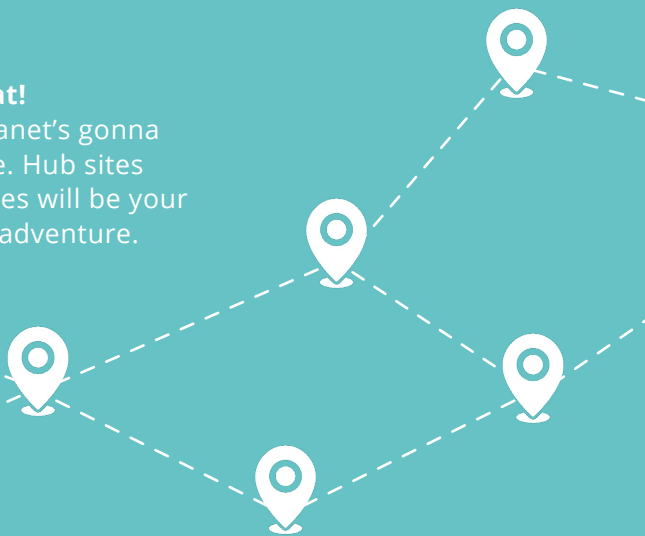


## Structure & Navigation

# The Art of Getting Around

### Don your architect hat!

Plan out how your intranet's gonna be a breeze to navigate. Hub sites and communication sites will be your trusty sidekicks in this adventure.



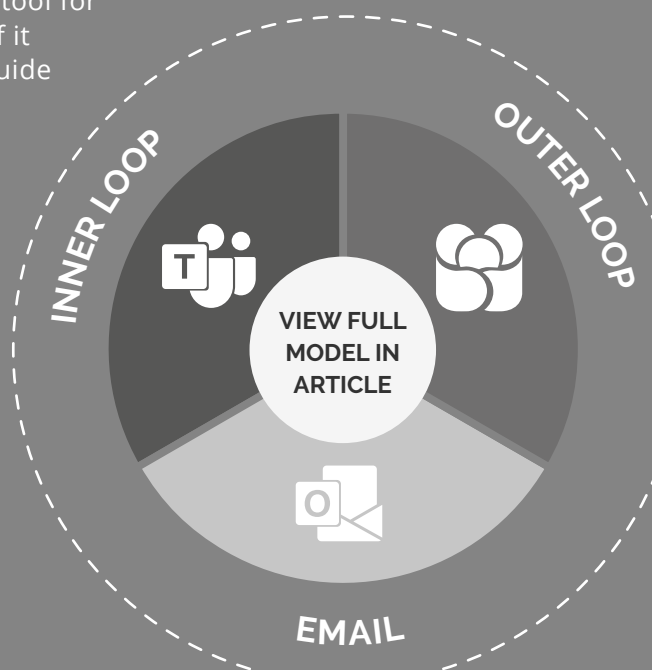
# Harmony in the M365 Universe



## Inner & Outer Loop: Tools Unleashed

**Remember that nifty inner and outer loop concept from Microsoft?**

Yep, still gold. It's like a cheat sheet for choosing the right tool for the right task. Think of it as your superpower guide to making things happen.





## Content Kingdom:

# Know What Goes Where



**Content's king, but it needs a home. Decide what lands on your intranet.**

Everything open for everyone? If people need cozy nooks, Microsoft Teams swoops (lol) in to save the day.

SITE 1

SITE 2

SITE 3

## Training & Analytics:

# Masters of the Craft

### Train those content creators!

Give them the keys to the kingdom: web writing tips, accessibility magic, and how to make colleagues do the happy dance on their pages.

Oh, and peek at analytics — SWOOP Analytics rocks — for insights to level up that intranet game.

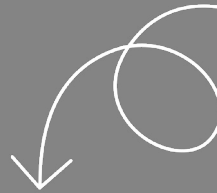


# Test, Learn & Embrace the Journey

Here's the SWOOP scoop: perfection's a myth. But building your intranet on SharePoint Online? Heck yes!

Be ready for some curveballs, get cozy with creative solutions, and never hesitate to seek the pros. You and your crew will rock this.

Keep learning, adapting, and watch the magic unfold!



**READ THE FULL ARTICLE »**

<https://www.swoopanalytics.com/blog/build-a-great-intranet>



## 7.3 The power of actionable analytics for intranets

**When it comes to analytics to measure the success of your intranet, web-based tools like Google Analytics are potentially misleading and meaningless. Analytics for intranets need to be led by the actions you're planning to take, says intranet and digital workplace specialist Sam Marshall.**

Using the right analytics will provide a roadmap of what needs to be done, and who needs to do it.

Sam Marshall is the owner of [ClearBox Consulting](#), which specializes in intranets and the wider digital workplace, with a focus on enabling workplaces to become more coherent and employee friendly. ClearBox also publishes the [Buyer's Guide to Intranet and Employee Experience Platforms](#) which is must-read for anyone interested in intranet and EX (employee experience) platforms.

He says it's vital to have analytics for intranets, but they need to be analytics you're going to act on, and data you can map to a specific role. Web-based analytics will provide details about the type of people accessing the intranet pages but as the employer, you already have that information.

"Intranet analytics should be saying; 'Who are we actually engaging with and where are we missing people?'," Sam said.

"There's no point in measuring something unless you intend to do something with that data.

"Don't be led by what the tool wants to tell you, be led by the actions that you're planning to take."

Good analytics must be actionable and range from a very narrow focus all the way to a broad focus, all with the view of making working life better for employees.

When it comes to intranet analytics, Sam breaks it down to four necessary levels, starting at the narrow end and finishing at the broad end.

### 1. Page level analytics

Analytics for individual pages. Sam says these could include heat maps, the number of visits to a page along with dwell time, and provide practical and actionable advice for the owner of the page.

For example, a Finance Department administration assistant's role might be to update the intranet page on financial reporting. This is their sole responsibility when it comes to the intranet.



*Sam Marshall,  
Owner, ClearBox Consulting.*

“They don't care about anything else on the intranet and if you give them an overall intranet site report, they will feel it's just noise,” Sam said

“But if you say; ‘Your page is underperforming’, they can do something about that.”

## 2. Site level analytics

These analytics provide information about how each intranet site is performing and would include data on popular content, show what pages people are visiting and how they are navigating the site.

For example, the person responsible for internal communications for France in a multi-national company would use this data to see if their French colleagues are accessing the information they need on their intranet site. They don't care about the data related to US employees but if they can see French employees are not accessing the site, they can use the data to change their content.

## 3. Platform level analytics

This level of analytics takes in the whole company intranet. The data provides information on whether employees are actively using the intranet and on the governance side, the data would identify dead and outdated content.

“At the platform level, the analytics might be accessed by the product owner who can see the intranet is generally working fine, but everyone is complaining about search not working,” Sam said.

## 4. Digital workplace level analytics

Think of these as cross-channel communication analytics across the entire organization. The internal communications and HR departments would access these analytics to see how a particular campaign performed across all channels. Are employees still reading newsletter emails or should they instead be directed to the intranet to avoid spamming people? These analytics would ensure organizations get the balance of communications right.

For example, if a company was launching a diversity and inclusion campaign, they could access the analytics to see how successful it was.

“They should ask: ‘Did we have the most effective reach by doing a mail drop, by putting something on Viva Engage, through the home page of the intranet or by doing push alerts to the employee app?’” Sam said.

“This data gives us insights into how we reach our audience by a multiplicity of ways rather than just saying the intranet was good or bad.”

Digital workplace level analytics would also give insights into how employees from different teams, departments, countries etc are accessing communications to target each sector.

The key to digital workplace level analytics, Sam says, is to tag all content related to a campaign, which might include everything from videos posted on the intranet and Viva Engage, to executive posts and news articles on the intranet. You can then look at what performed well and what resonated with employees.

Sam shared the example of a diversity and inclusion campaign at a multi-national organization that used its intranet as a business-use platform for dry, corporate communications. As part of the campaign, an employee in Greece posted a blog on the intranet sharing his personal story of what he's had to deal with as a gay man.

"It was the most engaged piece they ever had," Sam said.

"It had over 100 comments whereas most intranet stories didn't get a single comment. Executives were asking why they didn't get that sort of engagement?"

"It was a great lesson for them to realize that maybe you need to bring yourselves to it a little more and not just talk about the business."

Other things Sam would like to see for intranet analytics are how people are accessing the site, whether it be via an app on personal phones or via work or personal computers.

At [SWOOP Analytics](#), we've taken Sam's advice on board and many of the themes outlined above are included in [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#). SWOOP Analytics provides actionable insights by developing a series of health scores that cover quality, experience and engagement from the enterprise level right down to page level. This helps everyone involved in your intranet to be alerted to spelling errors, broken links or pages that are hard to read. Combining [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) with [SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage](#), you can cross-reference intranet pages with relevant communities to find out if intranet content shared on Viva Engage is driving readership and if discussions around intranet-related content are occurring on Viva Engage. If you are looking for advice on selecting an intranet or EX platform we suggest you also talk to ClearBox.



## 8 Introducing the SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet personas

As we started to investigate the time people spent visiting pages and news items on SharePoint intranets we wanted to be able to show to intranet managers, site owners and page authors how these visitors engage with content.

We've developed a set of personas based on the different amounts of time visitors spend on a page, and compared this with the time it would take to either quickly scan for keywords, speed-read to get a general understanding, or to read the page fully. We categorize each page visitor and assign each visitor with one of our five personas. We can then show at a page, site or intranet level which is the most common persona, making it easy to see the experience of each visitor.

The SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet personas will be live on the [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) dashboard before the end of 2023, but in the meantime, we wanted to introduce you to our five SharePoint intranet personas.



### Glancers

Glancers typically spend so little time on a page they are unlikely to get any relevant information from the page.

They probably arrived at the page unintentionally and immediately leave.

A high percentage of Glancers may indicate there are issues with navigation, or link text, in other pages.

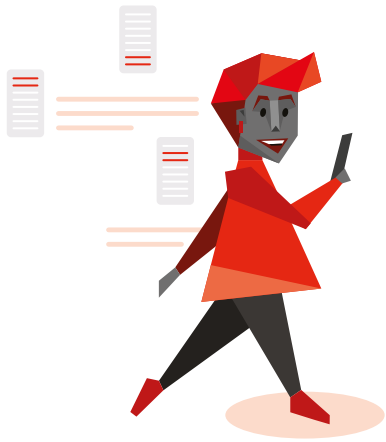


### Scanners

Scanners typically spend enough time on a page to look for a particular word or link.

They are not reading the page to understand it but to find a particular thing.

A high percentage of Scanners may indicate the page is used to navigate somewhere else.

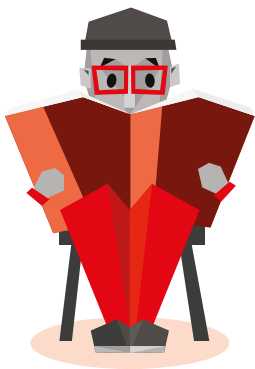


### Speed-readers

Speed-readers typically spend enough time on a page to get the main points from the content.

They are skim reading the content so can miss the full details of the page.

A high percentage of Speed-readers may indicate pages have too much content to easily digest.



### Readers

A Reader is the dream persona because it means these people are taking the time to read, and likely engage with, your content.

Readers typically spend enough time on a page to read and fully understand the content.

A high percentage of Readers on your SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet dashboard likely indicates visitors are finding the content engaging and valuable.



### Campers

Campers typically spend more time than is needed to read a page.

A high percentage of Campers may indicate the page contains information that needs to be constantly referred to, or the page may be difficult to understand and requires re-reading several times.

## 9 Join the 2024 SharePoint Intranet Festival on May 15, 2024

We're hosting the first-ever [SharePoint Intranet Festival](#) on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 and we're inviting you to join.

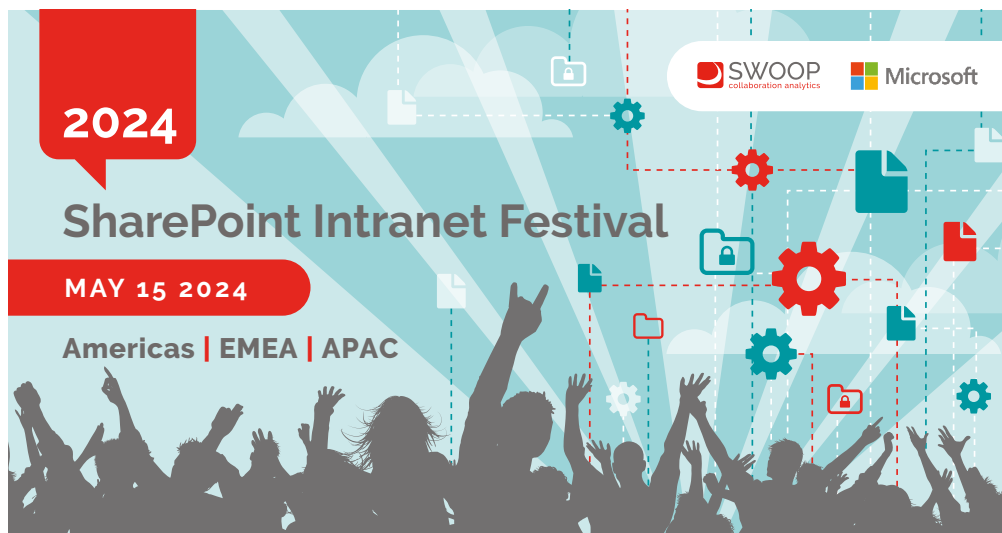
This festival will focus on intranet best practice and you'll hear from some of the world's biggest organizations about how they successfully launched a SharePoint Online intranet.

You'll learn from intranet experts, receive SharePoint Online updates from Microsoft and we'll share with you the latest findings from our full SWOOP Analytics' SharePoint intranet benchmarking report to be released to coincide with the festival.



**If you're managing an intranet, you can't miss this event!**

[Learn more.](#)



# 10 Join SWOOP Analytics' 2024 SharePoint Intranet Benchmarking Study

After reading this report, we're sure you'd love to know how your SharePoint intranet compares with others, whether you're achieving the benchmarks we suggest and how your organization's intranet measures up. We'd love to help by having you trial [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) for free and participating in our full SharePoint intranet benchmarking study in 2024.

SWOOP Analytics benchmarking is free and your data remains anonymous. We'll alert you to the SharePoint intranet pages that need to be cleaned up, or are out of date, and show you which pages are being accessed by whom, at what times and what are your most popular pages and how long people visit them.

You must be trialing [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) by **March 30, 2024** to be included in the 2024 benchmarking study. You will have free access to [SWOOP Analytics for SharePoint intranet](#) for a limited time and your SWOOP customer success manager will walk you through the measures so you can see exactly how your intranet is performing to know if it is fit for purpose.

## Your data is 100% confidential

SWOOP Analytics does not store any message content, names or email addresses. Your company name is kept confidential and your participation is not disclosed, unless you agree to be named as an intranet champion.

Want to find out more? You'll find all the details to participate in [SWOOP's 2024 SharePoint Benchmarking Report on this page](#). Once you register, our Customer Success Team will be in touch to walk you through all the details. We're looking forward to you being a part of SWOOP's next SharePoint intranet Benchmarking Report!

We also conduct benchmarking for [Viva Engage](#), [Microsoft 365](#), [Microsoft Teams](#) and we can do custom benchmarking for [Workplace from Meta](#).



**To see SWOOP Analytics live in action using your own data on [Viva Engage](#), [Workplace from Meta](#), [SharePoint Online](#), [Microsoft 365](#) or [Microsoft Teams](#), [request a demo today](#).**

## 11 About the authors



**Dr. Laurence Lock Lee is the Co-founder and Chief Scientist at [SWOOP Analytics](#).**

He is an experienced professional, with over 40 years' experience as a researcher, technology leader, educator and management consultant. Dr Lock Lee is one of the world's leading practitioners in Social Network Analysis for organizational change, having conducted more than 100 consulting assignments for clients around the world. He holds a PhD on corporate social capital from the University of Sydney. In the 1980s, at BHP Research, he led the largest private sector Artificial Intelligence laboratory in Australia. He also previously led the national Knowledge Management consulting practices at BHP Information Technology (BHPIT) and at Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC). Dr Lock Lee has published two books and numerous journal and industry articles. He is a regular contributor to Reworked, CMSWire and blogs at SWOOP Blog.



**Sharon Dawson is [SWOOP Analytics](#)' Director, External Relationships & External Communication.**

She is experienced in media and communications, having spent more than a decade working for Australian Associated Press (AAP) in the Sydney, Canberra and London bureaux. Sharon has covered Olympic and Commonwealth Games, worked in the Australian federal press gallery, reported on federal elections and been a sports correspondent for many years. Sharon joined the SWOOP team in 2017 as it expanded into the United States. Sharon holds a Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies) from The University of Newcastle.

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